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THE LIFE AND LETTERS
OF
LAURENCE STERNE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY: a Biography
THE THACKERAY COUNTRY
SOME ASPECTS OF THACKERAY
VICTORIAN NOVELISTS
THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF WILLIAM BECKFORD

THE BEAUX OF THE REGENCY
BATH UNDER BEAU NASH
BRIGHTON
THE FIRST GEORGE
"FARMER GEORGE"
"THE FIRST GENTLEMAN OF EUROPE"
SOME ECCENTRICS AND A WOMAN
Etc., Etc.

WITH HELEN MELVILLE

LONDON'S LURE
FULL FATHOM FIVE
THE SEASONS
And other Anthologies

Univ. of
California



LAURENCE STERNE.

*From a facsimile reproduction by Messrs. P. and D. Colnaghi of a portrait by Carmontelle
(in the collection of the Duc d'Aumale at Chantilly).*

[Frontispiece I.]

THE LIFE AND LETTERS
OF
LAURENCE STERNE

BY
LEWIS MELVILLE

"Laugh I will, my lord, and as loud as I can."
STERNE TO WARBURTON.

WITH TWENTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS, INCLUDING TWO
FRONTISPIECES IN COLOUR

IN TWO VOLUMES

UNIV. OF
VOL. I

NEW YORK
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1912

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D.LITT., LL.D.

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P R E F A C E

It is astonishing that a man of letters so eminent as Laurence Sterne should have had to wait nearly a hundred years for a biographer. John Wilkes and John Hall-Stevenson, when their friend died, announced their intention to write his life, but, in spite of his daughter's frequent reminders, they never even began the task. It was not until the eve of the centenary of his death that the "Life of Sterne," by Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, appeared; and this work remained in sole possession of the field for several decades. "It contains," Mr. Traill wrote of it in his monograph on Sterne, contributed in 1882 to the "English Men of Letters" series, "nearly all the information as to the facts of Sterne's life that is now ever likely to be recovered." This statement, happily, was soon falsified by the discovery of numerous letters and other material, which Mr. Fitzgerald incorporated in the 1896 edition of his work; and once again critics declared that now the sources of information were all disclosed. Scarcely had this been

PREFACE

said when, in the "Dictionary of National Biography," appeared Sir Sidney Lee's admirable memoir, containing a host of facts hitherto unknown and references to much unpublished matter. More recently has come upon the scene an American biographer, Professor Cross, who dismissed Mr. Fitzgerald's work as being "so untrustworthy in all details, that any reliance upon it would have meant disaster," and declared that Sir Sidney Lee's sketch "suffers . . . from a repetition of old errors."

It is becoming more and more the custom, with each succeeding biographer, to excuse the publication of his book by disparaging the work of his predecessors. I have neither the taste nor the desire to indulge in this habit: on the contrary, I am eager to express my gratitude to those who have already laboured in the field. He who condemns Mr. Fitzgerald's biography should at least make acknowledgment of the fact that with great industry this author collected a considerable mass of information which has been of value to all who have followed in his footsteps; and, instead of hinting at a trifling slip or two in Sir Sidney Lee's memoir, it would be more gracious frankly to admit that it is the standard authority on the subject, and the basis of all subsequent biographies. To Professor Cross's scholarly book (published when my work was more than half finished) I owe something, as indeed, to all previous writers on Sterne;

but my heaviest debt is undoubtedly to Sir Sidney Lee.

Around every great man many legends arise, and biographers, annotators, and writers of articles collect a mass of detail which is heaped together until there is danger that the man will be entirely hidden from view. Sterne, indeed, has not suffered so much in this way as many other authors, but he has not escaped unscathed. I have been careful to omit everything that seems to me unessential to the understanding of the man; but I have endeavoured to collect all that helps to build up his character. Some writers on Sterne have chosen to paraphrase his letters, and have put forth in their own words what Sterne (it is no discourtesy to them to say) has expressed infinitely better in his own. The simplest and, I think, the best way to show the great man in his habit as he lived is to allow him, whenever possible, to speak for himself. It is with this object that I have printed most of the existing letters, written by Sterne, including several that have not been reprinted since the original publication shortly after his death, as well as others from private collections. The much-discussed "Journal to Eliza" now appears for the first time in a biography of its author.*

* It was first printed in Professor Cross's limited edition *de luxe* of Sterne's Works published in America. In 1910 it was reprinted as an Appendix to Mr. Walter Sichel's interesting study of the humorist.

During the progress of this work I have received assistance from many quarters. My very sincere thanks are due to Lord Basing, who lent me the interesting unpublished letters in his possession, written in India by Mrs. Draper to members of her family at home. Mr. John Murray has generously allowed me to print the letters from Sterne to Catherine de Fourmantelle, the copyright of which belongs to him; and also the letters from Sterne and Mrs. Sterne printed in Mrs. Climenson's "Elizabeth Montagu, Queen of the Blue-stockings." Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. have kindly permitted me to reprint the letters written by Sterne, which appeared in the article, "Sterne at Home," published in the *Cornhill Magazine* for November 1892. I am indebted, for copies of letters written by Sterne in their possession, to Mr. Adrian H. Joline, of New York; Mr. W. K. Bixby, of St. Louis; Mr. A. M. Broadley, Messrs. Sotheran & Co., and the late Alfred H. Huth; while information on various matters has generously been afforded me by the Dean of Bristol; the Rev. Canon Watson; the Rev. H. B. Drew, Vicar of Sutton-in-the-Forest; the Rev. Ernest Hedger, Rector of Coxwold; Mr. W. J. Locke; Mr. Rudolph Dirck; Mr. J. F. Meehan; Mr. W. H. A. Wharton, of Skelton Castle; and Mr. A. D. Carey, of the War Office Library.

The Marquess of Lansdowne, K.G., has kindly allowed me to reproduce the portrait of Sterne

by Reynolds that is at Lansdowne House; and the Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, has permitted me to reproduce the portrait by Ramsay. The Rev. Canon Blenkin has lent me photographs of the portraits in his possession of Sterne and Mrs. Sterne by Francis Cotes, which are here used by permission of Messrs. Williams & Norgate, who have already reproduced them in Mr. Sichel's study of "Sterne." Messrs. P. & D. Colnaghi have generously supplied me with a copy of their facsimile reproduction of Carmantelle's portrait of Sterne; and Mr. W. V. Daniell (of King Street, St. James's) kindly lent me the colour-print of "Sterne and the Monk." The Committee of the Peel Park Museum, Salford, sanctioned the reproduction of the Gainsborough portrait in their Galleries; and Mr. Harry Furniss courteously sent me the sketch of the Parsonage House at Coxwold and the facsimile letter written by Sterne to Garrick. The Rev. H. W. Clark, of Harpenden, has been good enough to read the proof-sheets of this work.

The chapter "Sterne and the Demoniacs" appeared in the New York *Bookman*, and a portion of the chapters "Sterne and Eliza" and "Mrs. Draper" in the *Fortnightly Review*; and these were subsequently reprinted in a volume of essays, entitled "Some Eccentrics and a Woman."

LEWIS MELVILLE.

SALOOMBE, HARPENDEN, HERTS.

July 1910.

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ON A PORTRAIT OF DR. LAURENCE STERNE, BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

When Punch gives friend and foe
their due,
Can unwash'd mirth grow riper ?
Yet when the curtain falls, how few
Remain to pay the piper !

If pathos should thy bosom stir
To tears, more sweet than laughter,
Oh, bless its kind interpreter,
And love him ever after !

Dear Parson of the roguish eye !
Your face has grown historic
Since saint and sinner flock'd to buy
The homilies of "Yorick."

I fain would add one blossom to
The chaplet Fame has wreath'd
you.

My friends, the crew that "Yorick"
drew

Accept, as friends bequeath'd you.

At Shandy Hall I like to stop
And see my ancient crony,
And in the lane meet Dr. Slop
Astride a slender pony.

Mine uncle, in his bowling-green,
Still storms a breach in Flanders ;
And faithful Trim, stark, tall, and
lean,
With Bridget still phillanders.

And here again they visit us
By happy inspiration,
The "Fortunes of Pistratus,"
A tale of fascination.

But lay his magic volume by,
And thank the Great Enchanter ;—
Our loins are girded, let us try
A sentimental canter. . . .

A temple quaint of latest growth
Expands, where Arts and Science,
Astounded by our lack of both,
Have founded an alliance.

One picture there all passers scan,
As if few sights were stranger :
Come, gaze upon the guiltless man,
And tremble for his danger.

Mine uncle's bluff—his waistcoat's
buff,—
The heart beneath is tender,—
Bewitching widow. Hold ! Enough !
Thou fairest of thy gender.

The limner's art—the poet's pen !—
Posterity the story,
Shall tell how these thrice-gifted men
Have wrought for "Yorick's" glory.

O name not easily forgot !
Our love, dear Shade, we show you,
Regretting where you err'd, but not
Forgetting what we owe you.

FREDERICK LOCKER-LAMPSON.

The Life and Letters of LAURENCE STERNE

CHAPTER I

FAMILY HISTORY AND EARLY YEARS

(1718—1728)

The Sterne family—William Sterne—Simon Sterne—Richard Sterne, Archbishop of York—The Archbishop's third son, Simon—Simon's eldest son, Richard—His third son, Jaques—His second son, Roger, father of Laurence—Roger's marriage with Mrs. Hebert—Their married life and their children—Roger's military career—His death—Laurence's affection for his father—Roger one of the prototypes of My Uncle Toby—Captain Hinde another prototype—Laurence's early education—Laurence's reminiscences of military life introduced into "Tristram Shandy."

THE family from which Laurence Sterne was descended cannot, with any degree of certainty, be traced further back than one William Sterne, who lived at some place unknown, in Suffolk, in the earlier half of the sixteenth century. This William had a son, Simon, who migrated to Mansfield, where he married Margery, daughter of Gregory Walker, a resident of that Nottinghamshire town. The issue of this union was Richard, born about 1596, who at the age of sixty-four was given the bishopric of Carlisle,

and four years later was translated to the Archbishopric of York. He married Elizabeth, daughter of Edward Dickinson, Lord of the Manor of Farnborough, and had thirteen children. With only one member of this large family are we here concerned—the third son, Simon, who married Mary, daughter and heiress of Sir Roger Jaques of Elvington, near York. She bore three sons and three daughters. Of the eldest son, Richard, who after his mother's death inherited her estate at Elvington, something will presently be said ; while the third son, Jaques, who entered the Church, takes a prominent place in the narrative of the early years of his nephew, Laurence Sterne. The second son, Roger, was the father of the humorist.

Of Roger Sterne but few particulars have been handed down. His son has stated that Roger was "Lieutenant in Handaside's regiment," better known as the 22nd Regiment of Foot ; but even this is inaccurate, for the records show that he was an ensign, not in the 22nd, but in the 84th Regiment of Foot. The 84th, or Cumberland, regiment was raised in 1702 by Robert, Lord Lucas, who held the command until his death three years later, when he was succeeded by Lieutenant-Colonel Hans Hamilton, promoted from the 16th Foot. The regiment now served abroad in Italy, Germany, Portugal, and Spain ; and after a brief sojourn in England, when probably Roger Sterne

joined it, was employed on garrison duty in Flanders.

The next event in Roger's life was his marriage on September 25, 1711 (O.S.), to Agnes, widow of Captain Hebert, "of a good family." She was the step-daughter of one Nuttle, an Irish sutler, who followed the British army in Flanders during the war with the French, and she probably lived with him after the death of her first husband. Laurence Sterne, in his brief autobiographical sketch, discloses one, if not the only, reason for his father's marriage: "N.B. He was in debt to him (Nuttle)." From this statement, it may be presumed that Roger was more or less coerced into taking to wife Mrs. Hebert; though it is not known whether Nuttle put pressure on him because of a desire to get his step-daughter off his hands, or in the belief that the ensign was a good *parti* for the young woman, who could bring her husband nothing but a receipt for his debts. If the sutler entertained the thought that he was doing well for his relative, he was sadly mistaken, because Roger never inherited any considerable sum of money, nor did he make any headway in his profession. Indeed, the history of this soldier's life, as recorded by his son, is one of the most pathetic things ever written. He had no means with which to purchase higher rank, nor apparently any influence that might have done away with the necessity for purchase, nor yet did he ever have

the chance to distinguish himself in the field. A subaltern when he married, a subaltern he was still when he died a score of years after, while those who had joined the regiment when he did, even many of those who joined long after, were promoted over his head. It was enough to have ruined the best temper in the world, yet save for occasional passing bursts of irritation, Roger seems to have borne his ill-fortune with fortitude.

Roger's marriage seems to have been happy, at least so happy as it could be in spite of the material worries, though his wife's character was not such as to enable her to bear her lot without repining. At Lille, on July 10, 1712, their first child, Mary, was born. Shortly after, the regiment (from November commanded by Thomas Chudleigh, *vice* Hans Hamilton promoted) was stationed at Dunkirk, but some months after the Peace of Utrecht had been signed it was removed to Clonmel, where Mrs. Sterne, on November 24, 1718, gave birth to a second child, Laurence, the subject of this memoir. "My birthday," says Sterne, "was ominous to my poor father, who was, the day after my arrival, with many other brave officers, broke, and sent adrift into the wide world with a wife and two children." The explanation of this passage is to be found in the fact that after the Peace of Utrecht the army was reduced in numbers, and all the corps raised after the

Treaty of Ryswick in 1697 were, with two exceptions, taken off the establishment, and the officers placed on half-pay.

The half-pay of an ensign—computed at a trifle over three shillings a day—was a negligible quantity, and it is easy to believe that this was the low-water mark of Roger Sterne's fortunes, which, even at their brightest, were far from roseate. The only hope for the ensign was that he should be transferred to another regiment; and in the meantime he and his family resided with his mother at the family seat at Elvington. In the summer of 1715, however, Jacobite riots and the rumours of an invasion by the Pretender induced the Government to strengthen the army, and warrants were issued for the restoration of several disbanded regiments, and among them the 84th Foot, Chudleigh again commanding, and second on the list of ensigns being Roger Sterne.

Immediately the regiment was re-formed, it was despatched to Dublin, in which city Mrs. Sterne with the children joined her husband; but within a month it was ordered to Exeter, and then to Plymouth, whither the ensign's family, travelling from Liverpool by land "in a sad winter," followed him. During the rebellion of '15 the 84th Foot was retained in England, and when all was safe again it returned to the Irish capital—Sterne says within twelve months of their leaving it, but the official records

give the date of 1717. Mrs. Sterne did not accompany her husband, but followed him with the children—there was now a third, Jorum, born at Plymouth—having “a narrow escape from being cast away by a leak springing up in the vessel.”

At Dublin Roger Sterne, his son mentions, “took a large house, furnished it, and in a year and a half spent a great deal of money”; but no clue is given as to where the money came from, though it is a reasonable conjecture that it may have been inherited at the death of Roger’s mother or his wife’s mother or step-father. A portion of it would have been put to better advantage if the ensign had purchased his step. “All unhinged again,” to use the words of Laurence Sterne, in the year 1719, when the 34th Foot was one of several regiments ordered to the Isle of Wight, there to hold itself in readiness for active service in Spain. This time Roger’s family accompanied him, but bad weather was again their lot, and the vessel was driven into Milford Haven, whence it proceeded subsequently to Bristol, where the troops were landed. About this time Jorum, a pretty boy of four years old, died of smallpox: not long after, his place was taken by a girl, Anne, born in the Isle of Wight on September 23, 1719. She, too, died young. “This pretty blossom fell at the age of three years, in the barracks of Dublin,” her brother has placed on record.

“ She was, as I well remember, of a fine delicate frame, not made to last long, as were most of my father’s babies.”

The 84th Foot took part in the attack on Vigo and in other operations, and returned in the late autumn, when it was stationed at Wicklow. Mrs. Sterne, who had remained in the Isle of Wight, now set out to join her husband, but the vessel in which she and the children sailed was nearly shipwrecked by a violent storm. So alarmed was she that she prevailed upon the captain to put in at a Welsh port, where she disembarked, and remained for a month—presumably because no other vessel bound for Dublin called there in the meantime. When she arrived in Ireland it was to find that the ensign had for some weeks been bewailing the loss of his wife and children.

At Wicklow during 1720 the ensign and his family lived together in barracks, where was born the fifth child, Devischer, (not Deveiher, as Sterne wrote it down), so-called after the colonel of the 9th Foot; and in the following year Mrs. Sterne, with the children, was for six months the guest of her relative, the Rev. Mr. Fetherston, at his parsonage at Animo, about seven miles from the barracks. “ It was in this parish, during our stay, that I had that wonderful escape in falling through a mill-race whilst the mill was going, and of being taken up unhurt,” Laurence Sterne has related. “ The

story is incredible, but known for truth in all that part of Ireland—where hundreds of the common people flocked to see me.” This clergyman was but one of many relatives of the Sternes living in Ireland. There were in Dublin Nuttalls (or Nuttles) connected with Mrs. Sterne, and a host of the ensign’s kindred in various parts of the island. The most important of the latter was John Sterne, a collateral descendant of the Archbishop, and a friend of Swift. Swift it was who secured his promotion to the deanery of St. Patrick, and recommended him in 1712 for the vacant bishopric of Dromore, from which, seven years later, Sterne was translated to the see of Clogher. There was a daughter, Anne, of Richard Sterne of York and Kilvington, who married William Cooke of Killinan, who owned estates in Tipperary and Limerick; and the issue of this marriage, Anne, married William Hill, of Kilmallock, near Limerick. Brigadier Sterne’s Royal Regiment of Ireland was commanded by Colonel Robert Sterne; and at Ormond was John Sterne, who in 1788 filled the municipal office of “Sheriff-peer.” Among others may be mentioned Enoch Sterne, Collector of the county of Wicklow, whose name occurs in the “Journal to Stella.” On what terms Roger Sterne was with these distant relatives is not known, but there is no allusion to any of them in his son’s memoir.

For the next five years the 84th Regiment

was moved from place to place, and Mrs. Sterne experienced to the full the discomforts of a subaltern's wife attached to a marching regiment. From Wicklow to Dublin they went; then in 1722 were ordered to Carrickfergus, but got no farther north than Drogheda; thence to Mullingar, "where by Providence we stumbled upon a kind relation, a collateral descendant from Archbishop Sterne, who took us all to his castle and kindly entertained us for a year—and sent us to the regiment at Carrickfergus, loaded with kindness, etc." Little Devischer had been left behind at nurse at a farm-house near Wicklow, but he was brought by the ensign to Carrickfergus, where in 1728 he died. In the same year was born another child, Susan, who died in infancy. About the same time Laurence left his family, his father having got leave of his colonel to fix him at school.

It is doubtful if Laurence ever saw his father again. The 84th Foot (which from February 1728 was commanded by Colonel Robert Hayes, *vice* Chudleigh retired) went from Carrickfergus to Londonderry, where Mrs. Sterne gave birth to the last child of the marriage, Catherine; and in February 1727 it was ordered to Gibraltar to assist in the defence of that place, which was then being attacked by a Spanish army under the command of the Count de la Torres. The regiment encountered a storm at sea and lost several companies by shipwreck, but six com-

panies arrived safely at their destination on March 26. In the following year, after a peace had been concluded, the regiment returned to Ireland. Roger had escaped the shipwreck and the hazards of war, only to meet with disaster in a duel with Captain Christopher Philips—a brother officer, who in 1715 had been sixth in the list of lieutenants. “The quarrel began about a goose,” Laurence has recorded. They fought in a room, and the captain ran his rapier through his opponent’s body with such force that it pinned the unhappy man to the wall behind him, whereupon the ensign, with great presence of mind, begged the other, before withdrawing the weapon, to be so good as to brush off any plaster that might have adhered to it, as it would be disagreeable to him to have it introduced into his system.*

With much difficulty Roger survived (his son related), though with an impaired constitution, which was not able to withstand the hardships he was put to—for he was sent to Jamaica, where he soon fell by the country fever, which took away his senses first and made a child of him, until in a month or two he sat down in an arm-chair, and breathed his last at Port Antonio, on the north side of the island.

Thus died Roger Sterne in March 1781. It is said that he had a volatile disposition, but he

* *Sterne and his Day* (*Dublin University Magazine*, September 1862; Vol. LX. p. 285).

must have had need of all his cheerfulness. The least ambitious soldier must have been unhappy when during a career of twenty years he remained to the end an ensign, compelled to consort with lads just beginning their military lives ; and even the knowledge that the promotion of others was more often due to purchase than to merit can scarcely have lessened his chagrin. The numerous long journeys his family had to make must have been a drain on his slender resources, and, unless he received monetary assistance from his relatives, it is not easy to see how he could have borne the expenses incidental to the bringing into the world of his numerous children. Yet through all his troubles and disappointments he never let himself be soured, and he won from his famous son a beautiful tribute :

My father was a little smart man—active to the last degree in all exercises—most patient of fatigue and disappointments, of which it pleased God to give him full measure. He was in his temper somewhat rapid and hasty—but of a kindly, sweet disposition, void of all design, and so innocent in his own intentions, that he suspected no one ; so that you might have cheated him ten times a day, if nine had not been sufficient for your purpose.

From his father Laurence Sterne undoubtedly derived some of his best qualities—his tender heart, his love for his daughter, the courage with

which he fought disease, and the fearlessness with which he faced death. It is the general opinion that My Uncle Toby was drawn by Laurence to personify his father, and certainly many of the ensign's qualities were reproduced in that immortal character.

My Uncle Toby was a man patient of injuries, not from want of courage. . . . I know no man under whose arm I would have sooner taken shelter; nor did this arise from any insensibility or obtuseness of his intellectual parts; . . . but he was of a peaceful placid nature—no jarring element in it—all was mixed up so kindly within him; my Uncle Toby had scarce a heart to retaliate upon a fly.*

"I like to hear Trim's stories about the captain," said Susannah.

"He is a kindly-hearted gentleman," said Obadiah, "as ever lived."

"Ay, and as brave a one, too," said the corporal, "as ever stept before a platoon. There never was a better officer in the King's army, or a better man in God's world; for he would march up to the mouth of a cannon, though he saw the lighted match at the very touch-hole; and yet, for all that, he has a heart as soft as a child for other people. He would not hurt a chicken."

"I would sooner," quoth Jonathan, "drive such a gentleman for seven pounds a year, than some for eight."†

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. II. ch. xii.

† *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. V. ch. x.

My heart stops me to pay to thee, my dear Uncle Toby, once for all, the tribute I owe thy goodness. Here let me thrust my chair aside, and kneel down upon the ground, whilst I am pouring forth the warmest sentiments of love for thee, and veneration for the excellence of thy character. . . . Peace and comfort rest evermore upon thy head ! *

It has been contended that Captain Hinde, the owner of Preston Castle, was the prototype of My Uncle Toby, and that Sterne told Lord Dacre that this was the case ; but the characters of great novelists are usually composite portraits, and even if Captain Hinde supplied the material for certain aspects of My Uncle Toby, it does not in the least disprove the suggestion that Ensign Sterne supplied his full share. Captain Hinde, an old soldier and a country gentleman, was a curious figure that may well have attracted the attention of the novelist. "Eccentric, full of military habits and recollections—simple-hearted, benevolent, and tenderly kind to the dumb creatures of the earth and air," so he has been described. "He gave the embattled front to his house—the labourers on his land were called from the harvest-field by notes of the bugle, and a battery was placed at the end of his garden. The animated old soldier, who delighted to talk of battles and sieges, was full of the most extra-

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. III. ch. xxxiv.

ordinary love for all living things. Finding that a bull-finch had built her nest in the garden-hedge, close to his battery, he specially ordered his men not to fire the guns until the little birds had flown. To fire these guns was his frequent amusement, but he would not allow a sound to disturb the feathered family." *

Sterne has told us that his education was begun at the age of eight, when he "learned to write, etc."; and his most intimate friend, John Hall-Stevenson, has supplemented this bald statement with the information that the humorist received his instruction from that brother-officer of his father who has been immortalised as Lieutenant Le Fever. But young Laurence, in those early years when he followed the regiment, acquired more than a knowledge of the alphabet, for his mind became stored with the details of the life he witnessed in barracks and on the parade-ground. The military references in "Tristram Shandy" were undoubtedly drawn from the author's recollections of the early years of his life, when he heard the veterans discuss uniforms and the operations of war, and fight their battles over again. Thus he met not only the original of Le Fever, but also of Trim (whose name may have been suggested by the fact that the Bishop of Clogher already mentioned was sometime Bishop of Trim), and he grew familiar with fosses,

* *Macmillan's Magazine*, July 1873, Vol. XXVIII. p. 239.

bastions, glacis, and counterscarps ; with Montero-caps, Ramilie wigs, "the blue and gold taken up at the sleeves," the "thin scarlet breeches," and the scarlet roquelaire which Captain Shandy wore in the trenches before the gate of St. Nicholas ; with the plans of the siege of Quesnoi, the battle of Landen, the battle of Wynendale, and the siege of Namur, where My Uncle Toby received his famous wound.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY

(1724—1786)

Sterne taken under the protection of his uncle, Richard Sterne—Sent to Heath Grammar School—Roger Sterne dies penniless—His wife sets up an embroidery shop in Ireland—Richard Sterne advances money for his nephew's schooling—Sterne goes to Jesus College, Cambridge—Elected to a scholarship—His life at the University—John Fountayne—John Hall-Stevenson.

WHEN Laurence left his family and came to England, he went to the Grammar School of Queen Elizabeth at Heath, of which institution his father's eldest brother, Richard Sterne, of Elvington and Woodhouse, was a Governor.* According to Thomas Cox, the historian of this seminary, the lad entered the school in 1724 and remained there for six years, during which period the head master was Thomas Lister, M.B.—a curious degree for a schoolmaster—of Jesus College, Cambridge, who, after the lapse of a quarter of a century, was described by his famous pupil as “an able master.”

* There has been mooted an alternative theory that Laurence may have gone to the Free Grammar School at Hipperholme, but the balance of evidence inclines to the supposition that he was educated at the Grammar School at Heath.



LAURENCE STERNE.

(See p. 42.)

*From a drawing in crayons by Francis Cotes
(in the possession of the Rev. Canon Blenkin).*

TO THE
LIBRARY

Little or nothing is known of Laurence as a schoolboy, save what may be deduced from the anecdote that he proudly related :

The schoolmaster had had the ceiling of the schoolroom new whitewashed—the ladder remained there—I one unlucky day mounted it, and wrote with a brush, in large capital letters, LAU. STERNE, for which the usher severely whipped me. My master was very much hurt at this, and said, before me, that never should that name be effaced, for I was a boy of genius, and he was sure I should come to preferment.

“This expression made me forget the stripes I had received,” Laurence added ; and well it might, for such a tribute from a schoolmaster to a pupil is rare indeed. It may, then, be taken for granted that the lad showed very exceptional ability ; and there is the tradition that he was careless and inattentive, learning only when he would, which, it was said with humorous exaggeration, was “not oftener than once a fortnight.” * A perusal of “*Tristram Shandy*” suggests further that he had no taste for mathematics, but was distinctly interested in the classics.

There is some doubt as to the year in which Laurence left school. As already stated, Thomas Cox gives the date as 1780, and most

* *Anecdotes of a Fashionable Author* (in a letter to the *Ladies' Magazine*).

writers have accepted this as accurate ; but it is extremely improbable that this was the case.

Five years with a bib under his chin ;
 Four years in travelling from Christcross-row to Malachi ;
 A year and a half in learning to write his own name ;
 Seven long years and more ~~write~~ing it, at Greek and Latin.*

Thus Sterne, writing years later in "Tristram Shandy," apportioned his youth, and the seventeen and a half years calculated from his birth brings it to May 1731. This would indicate that he left school just after the death of his father, which is more likely than the earlier theory, but yet not convincing, for, if this is accepted, the problem facing the biographer is to account for the two following years, of which no records survive. The solution of the difficulty is surely to be found in the statement made in a letter from Sterne to his uncle Jaques, dated April 5, 1751, that his school education occupied nine years ; that is to say, that he remained at Heath until he went to Cambridge.

When Ensign Sterne died he left no property of any kind, and all his widow had to depend on was her pension of £20. At the time of her husband's death in the West Indies Mrs. Sterne was living with her family in Ireland, and soon after her bereavement she came to England on business connected with her pension, which she wished to be charged on the English establish-

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. V. ch. xlii.

ment ; she endeavoured, in vain, to enlist the influence of her brother-in-law, Jaques, in the furtherance of her design. " I well remember," Laurence subsequently wrote to his uncle, " she was forced to return back without having so much interest as to obtain the favour of being admitted to your presence ; not being suffered even to reach York." Having failed to effect her object, Mrs. Sterne returned to Ireland, where she set up an embroidery shop.

It was not in Mrs. Sterne's power to make any provision for her son's education, and she may well have thought that he was old enough to seek and obtain some post as clerk or warehouseman in an office or a shop. Fortunately this was not to be. Who paid for the lad's schooling is not known, but probably the money was advanced either by his uncle Richard or by his uncle Richard's eldest son. That, however, the money was a loan and not a gift is clear from a passage in one of Sterne's letters in which he mentions that, " the whole debt of my school education, clothing, etc., for nine years together came upon me the moment I was able to pay it"—which was soon after the living of Sutton-in-the-Forest was bestowed upon him. Richard Sterne, the elder, died in 1782, and he left the estate of Elvington to his eldest son ; Woodhouse passing to the offspring of his second marriage. This eldest son, another Richard, had several claims upon his purse, but

he undertook to allow Laurence £30 a year towards his expenses at a university.

Laurence naturally elected to go to Jesus College, Cambridge, where other members of his family had been, and the praises of which had doubtless been sung by his schoolmaster, Lister, who had been educated there. There he was admitted to a sizarship on July 6, 1733. Sterne, in his memoir, gives the year of his entering the University as 1732; but this is proved by the college books to be a mistake. Almost exactly a year later he was elected to a scholarship, worth £10 a year, founded by Archbishop Sterne "for the natives of Yorkshire and Nottingham." It has been urged that, as he was born in Ireland, he was not eligible; but since he was a member of an old-established Nottinghamshire family, now resident in Yorkshire, the fact that his father, in the exercise of his profession, had been a wanderer over the face of the earth was not allowed to invalidate his claim to be regarded as a candidate. Doubtless, too, his descent from the founder of the scholarship had something to do with his being elected to it. Sterne himself, however, so far from wishing to deny his Irish birth, was by no means unwilling to parade the fact.

So Burton [afterwards Lord Cunningham] really told you, with grave face and apparent mortification, that I had ridiculed my Irish

friends at Bath for an hour together, and had made a large company merry at Lady Lepel's table during an whole afternoon at their expence [he wrote with some heat to William Combe from Coxwoud, June 11, 1765]. By heavens, 'tis as false as misrepresentation can make it. It is not in my nature, I trust, to be so ungrateful as I should be, if, absent or present, I should be ungracious to them. . . . Besides, I am myself of their own country. My father was a considerable time on duty with his regiment in Ireland; and my mother gave me to the world when she was there, on duty with him. I beg of you, therefore, to make all these good people to believe that I have been at least misunderstood.

For some reason, perhaps from want of money to pay the fees, Sterne did not matriculate until March 29, 1785; but by this delay he lost no time, since in the following January he graduated B.A. Early in 1740, after he had left Cambridge, he proceeded M.A. The records of his life at the University are as scanty as those of his schooldays. John Croft has related that in Sterne "the same humour prevailed at College" as at the Grammar School at Heath, and that he was distinguished by "the vivacity of his disposition"; and this account is supported by the testimony of an anonymous writer of an obituary notice: "He spent the usual number of years, read a little, laugh'd a great deal, and sometimes took the diversion of puzzling his

tutors. He left Cambridge with the character of an odd man, that had no harm in him, and who had parts if, he would use them." * That Sterne's sympathies were broad, even at this time, seems certain from the fact that among his friends at Cambridge were men with such very different tastes as John Fountayne, afterwards Dean of York, and John Hall-Stevenson. With Hall-Stevenson, who was also at Jesus College, it has been mentioned by Croft, Sterne "used to study under a large Walnutt Tree, in the Inner Court, where one of 'em wrote underneath the lines :

" 'This shou'd be the Tree of Knowledge,
As it stands in so very wise a Colledge.' " †

The author was probably Hall-Stevenson, who amplified the couplet, and printed it years later in " Crazy Tales " :

" At CAMBRIDGE, many years ago,
In JESUS, was a Walnut-tree ;
The only thing it had to show,
The only thing folks went to see.

" Being of such a size and mass,
And growing in so wise a College,
I wonder how it came to pass,
It was not call'd the Tree of Knowledge."

Perhaps Sterne's greatest trouble in these days was to make ends meet on £40 a year, and, indeed, he did not succeed in his endeavour.

* *Anecdotes of a Fashionable Author* (in a letter to the *Ladies' Magazine*).

† *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 229.

Subsequently he complained that he had to pay a great part of the expense of his education at the University, "too scantily defrayed by my cousin Sterne, and the last year not payed, but with the money I borrowed." Probably he asked Richard Sterne for the promised allowance for the last year at Cambridge; and, as there is no further mention of Richard in Laurence's life, it is more than probable that the well-to-do man took the opportunity to quarrel with, and rid himself of, a dependent. It is, therefore, something to Sterne's credit that, writing in the last month of his life, he remembered the kindness rather than the injury, and set down in the autobiographical sketch he made for his daughter that, after Ensign Sterne's death, "by God's care of me, my cousin Sterne of Elvington became a father to me."

CHAPTER III

TAKES ORDERS—MARRIAGE

(1736—1741)

Sterne is assisted by his uncle, Jaques Sterne—He is ordained deacon—Appointed curate at St. Ives—Admitted to priest's orders—Nominated to the vicarage of Sutton-in-the-Forest—Lives chiefly at York—York in the 'thirties of the eighteenth century—Sterne's amusements—His humour in conversation—He makes the acquaintance of Elizabeth Lumley—Miss Lumley's family—Sterne makes love to her—His courtship—His love-letters—His marriage with Miss Lumley.

PERHAPS the greatest proof that, at the age of twenty-three, Laurence Sterne had shown himself possessed of remarkable ability is to be found in the fact that, when his cousin Richard of Elvington abandoned him, his uncle Jaques came forward with offers of assistance. Dr. Sterne was a selfish, pushing man, and the last person in the world to take under his protection a lame duck. He had refused even to use his influence on behalf of Laurence's mother at the time of his brother's death, and, as his nephew subsequently reminded him, he had held out no helping hand to him.

It is not necessary for my Defence to go so far back as the loss of my Father, your brother, whose death left me at the age of 16 without

one shilling in the world, and I may add *at that time* without one Friend in it except my cousin Sterne of Elvington, who became a father to me [he wrote on April 5, 1751]; for as you absolutely refused giving me any aid at my Father's death, you are sensible without *his* I should have been driven out naked into the world, young as I was, to have shifted for myself as well as I could.*

It is one thing to befriend a penniless boy, and another to assist a well-educated, brilliant young man of three-and-twenty; and Jaques, who had not enough heart to do the first, had the sense to see that much advantage might accrue to him by the second. The boy might have turned out a failure; the man had to some extent proved himself of the right mettle, and Dr. Sterne probably saw in him a useful assistant.

It is not known whether either or both of the Richard Sternes designed that Laurence should enter the Church, but when Dr. Sterne made himself responsible for the fortunes of his young relative he saw at once that it was in this profession he could best further his protégé's interest. There is no reason to believe that Laurence had any wish to take orders, but then there is nothing to show that he had any leaning to any other profession; and since it was doubtless represented to him that he must be-

* British Museum, Add. MSS., 25479 f. 12.

come a clergyman, he accepted Hobson's choice. It is imperative that this should be remembered when summing up his character.

With little delay after leaving the University, Laurence was on March 6, 1736, ordained deacon at Buckden, in Huntingdonshire, by Richard Reynolds, Bishop of Lincoln; and he was, as Professor Cross recently discovered, at once appointed to a curacy at St. Ives, in the same county. On August 20, 1738, he was admitted to priest's orders by Samuel Peploe, Bishop of Chester, at Chester Cathedral; and a few days later, Archbishop Blackburne, doubtless at Dr. Sterne's request, nominated him to the vicarage of Sutton in the Forest of Galtres, a living worth £40 a year, in the gift of the Cathedral of York.

As Sutton was only eight miles from York, Sterne continued to live in the city, which then was far more important from the social point of view than it is to-day, being indeed to all intents and purposes the northern capital. Defoe, writing of York in the year when Sterne settled there, remarked that the "great support of the city is owing to the Residence of several County Gentlemen, with their families, in it, who are induced to settle here from the great Plenty of Provisions of all Sorts, which makes it easy to furnish an elegant Table at moderate Expence." * Another reason that made it a centre of society was its distance from the

* *Tour thro' Great Britain* (ed. 1738); Vol. III. p. 128.

capital, when travelling was as slow as it was expensive. The great lords of the neighbourhood, the Duke of Leeds at Kiveton, the Earl of Carlisle at Castle Howard, and the Earl of Burlington at Lanesborough, might go to London, and thence to Bath or Tunbridge Wells to take the waters ; but squires of more moderate means could not make such journeys except at long intervals. Instead, they brought their families to York for the winter season, and so greatly increased the number of the gentry and persons of distinction who lived in the city, to quote the old chronicle, in " Houses proportioned to their Quality." In days when a little dissipation went a long way with country folk, York was regarded as a very gay city. There was a theatre, there were balls, assemblies, concerts, and once a year races on Hambleton Downs, which last were so famous as to attract sportsmen even from the metropolis.

For a young clergyman York had attractions even more potent than its social gaieties, because there one could get the earliest intelligence of vacant benefices, and meet the persons whose influence controlled the bestowal of them. Sterne, however, was not a pushing man, and too proud or too indolent to sue for any man's favour ; but like his brethren, though from other motives, he frequented Sunton's Coffee-house in Coney Street. He was of a gregarious disposition, and chose the company and the

gossip to be had at Sunton's, or at the George, in preference to the dull seclusion of his vicarage house at Sutton. He made friends at York, but he was inclined to let his wit get out of hand, and there is no doubt that he was not generally popular.

Trust me, dear Yorick [Eugenius is made to say in "Tristram Shandy"] this unwary pleasantry of thine will sooner or later bring thee into scrapes and difficulties, which no after-wit of thine can extricate thee out of. In these sallies, too oft, I see, it happens, that a person laughed at, considers himself in the light of a person injured, with all the rights of such a situation belonging to him; and when thou viewest him in that light too, and reckonest up his friends, his family, his kindred and allies,—and musterest up with them the many recruits which will list under him from a sense of common danger;—it is no extravagant arithmetic to say, that for every ten jokes,—thou hast got an hundred enemies; and till thou hast gone on, and raised a swarm of wasps about thine ears, and art half stung to death by them, thou wilt never be convinced it is so.*

Of Sterne's humour in conversation not many instances have been handed down, and of the few recorded it must be confessed that they show readiness rather than wit. One day, Sterne met a brother clergyman in the Minster

* Vol. I. ch. xii.

Yard, and in the course of conversation some differences arose, whereupon the other, losing his temper, remarked angrily, "Sir, I never give way to a fool." "Sir," retorted Laurence, "I always do," and directly gave way to let him pass. On a lady entering the Assembly Room, Sterne asked her name, and was told she was a Mrs. Hobson. "I have often heard of Hobson's Choice," he said, "but I never saw it before." A story more worthy of him has been related by Hall-Stevenson. At a coffee-house at York a stranger, after descanting freely upon religion and the hypocrisy of the clergy, addressed himself to Sterne, asking what were his sentiments upon the subject. Sterne, instead of answering him directly, said, "My dog is reckoned one of the most beautiful pointers in the whole county. He is very good-natured, but has an infernal trick which destroys all his good qualities. He never sees a clergyman but he immediately flies at him." "Indeed, sir," inquired the other, falling into the trap, "how long may he have had that trick?" "Sir," replied Sterne, quietly, looking the other full in the face, "ever since he was a puppy."

Not long after Sterne had been inducted to the living of Sutton he made the acquaintance at York of Elizabeth Lumley, the lady who was to become his wife. Her father was the Rev. Robert Lumley, Rector of Bedale in the North Riding, then one of the best livings in York-

shire, worth at that time about £2,000 a year ; and her mother was Lydia, widow of Thomas Kirke, of Cookridge, near Leeds, and daughter of Anthony Light, of Durham. Mrs. Kirke married Lumley in 1711, two years after the death of her first husband, and she presented him with two daughters, Elizabeth, born in 1714, and Lydia.

When Sterne met Elizabeth, which was probably in 1739, she had lost both her parents and was living with a maid in Little Alice Lane, within the Close of York Minster. She was then five-and-twenty years of age, a year younger than the Rector of Sutton, homely in appearance, but intelligent and well-educated enough, it is said, subsequently to assist her husband in the composition of his sermons ; and as she had, too, the further attraction of a dowry of £40 a year, the value of which was probably magnified by rumour, her hand was sought by many.

Sterne made love to her, innocently enough no doubt, yet, it is permissible to assume, at first with no thought of marriage : he was a man of sentiment, and, as will presently be shown, flirted with every woman he met ; the instinct of the duel of sex was strong in him. Miss Lumley seems to have liked him, or, at least, to have been flattered by his attentions, though when he proposed to her—and this eventually he did more than once—she put him off, but without seriously discouraging him.

“She owned she liked me,” Sterne many years later told his daughter, “but thought herself not rich enough, or me too poor, to be joined together.” Such a refusal, coupled with the assurance of affection, would not cause any suitor to turn away; nor is it probable that the lady desired it to have this effect. Opposition, however slight, always has the same effect on a philanderer as the spur on a horse; and there is no doubt that henceforth Sterne’s wooing became more persistent: with the result that the lady, probably more with the view to test the enduring quality of his devotion than from any desire to rid herself of him, left York on a visit to her sister Lydia, now married to the Rev. John Botham, of Clifton-Campville, in Staffordshire.

“I wrote to her often,” Sterne has put it on record, alluding to the period of Miss Lumley’s absence from York; and happily four of his letters, written during the winter of 1740–1, were preserved by the lady.

[Undated.]

Yes! I will steal from the world, and not a babbling tongue shall tell where I am—Echo shall not so much as whisper my hiding-place. Suffer thy imagination to paint it as a little sun-gilt cottage, on the side of a romantic hill—dost thou think I will leave love and friendship behind me? No! they shall be my companions in solitude, for they will sit down and rise up

with me in the amiable form of my L.—We will be as merry and as innocent as our first parents in Paradise, before the arch-fiend entered that undescrivable scene.

The kindest affections will have room to shoot and expand in our retirement, and produce such fruit as madness, and envy, and ambition have always killed in the bud.—Let the human tempest and hurricane rage at a distance, the desolation is beyond the horizon of peace.—My L. has seen a polyanthus blow in December—some friendly wall has sheltered it from the biting wind.—No planetary influence shall reach us, but that which presides and cherishes the sweetest flowers.—God preserve us! how delightful this prospect in idea! We will build, and we will plant, in our own way—simplicity shall not be tortured by art—we will learn of Nature how to live—she shall be our alchymist, to mingle all the good of life into one salubrious draught.—The gloomy family of care and distrust shall be banished from our dwelling, guarded by thy kind and tutelar deity—we will sing our choral songs of gratitude, and rejoice to the end of our pilgrimage.

Adieu, my L. Return to one who languishes for thy society.

[Undated.]

You bid me tell you, my dear L., how I bore your departure for Staffordshire, and whether the valley where D'Estella stands retains still its looks—or, if I think the roses or jessamines smell as sweet, as when you left it—Alas! every thing has now lost its relish and look! The



THE TERRACE, YORK.

(See p. 46.)

From an engraving by C. J. Smith.

TO THE
LIBRARY

hour you left D'Estella, I took to my bed.—I was worn out with fevers of all kinds, but most by that fever of the heart with which thou knowest well I have been wasting these two years—and shall continue wasting till you quit Staffordshire. The good Miss S——, from the forebodings of the best of hearts, thinking I was ill, insisted upon my going to her.—What can be the cause, my dear L., that I never have been able to see the face of this mutual friend, but I feel myself rent to pieces? She made me stay an hour with her, and in that short space I burst into tears a dozen different times—and in such affectionate gusts of passion, that she was constrained to leave the room, and sympathise in her dressing-room.—I have been weeping for you both, said she, in a tone of the sweetest pity—for poor L.'s heart, I have long known it—her anguish is as sharp as yours—her heart as tender—her constancy as great—her virtues as heroic—Heaven brought you not together to be tormented. I could only answer her with a kind look and a heavy sigh—and returned home to your lodgings (which I have hired till your return), to resign myself to misery.—Fanny had prepared me a supper—she is all attention to me—but I sat over it with tears; a bitter sauce, my L., but I could eat it with no other—for the moment she began to spread my little table, my heart fainted within me.—One solitary plate, one knife, one fork, one glass!—I gave a thousand pensive, penetrating looks at the chair thou hadst so often graced, in those quiet and sentimental repasts—then laid down my knife and

fork, and took out my handkerchief, and clapped it across my face and wept like a child.—I do so this very moment, my L. ; for, as I take up my pen, my poor pulse quickens, my pale face glows, and tears are trickling down upon the paper, as I trace the word Lumley. O thou ! blessed in thyself, and in thy virtues—blessed to all that know thee—to me most so, because more do I know of thee than all thy sex.—This is the philtre, my L., by which thou hast charmed me, and by which thou wilt hold me thine, whilst virtue and faith hold this world together.—This, my friend, is the plain and simple magic, by which I told Miss —— I have won a place in that heart of thine, on which I depend so satisfied, that time, or distance, or change of every thing which might alarm the hearts of little men, create no uneasy suspense in mine.—Wast thou to stay in Staffordshire these seven years, thy friend, though he would grieve, scorns to doubt, or to be doubted—'tis the only exception where security is not the parent of danger.—I told you poor Fanny was all attention to me since your departure—contrives every day bringing in the name of L. She told me last night (upon giving me some hartshorn), she had observed my illness began the very day of your departure for Staffordshire ; that I had never held up my head, had seldom, or scarce ever, smiled, had fled from all society—that she verily believed I was broken-hearted, for she had never entered the room, or passed by the door, but she heard me sigh heavily—that I neither ate, or slept, or took pleasure in any thing as before ;

—judge then, my L., can the valley look so well
—or the roses and jessamines smell so sweet as
heretofore? Ah me!—But adieu—the vesper
bell calls me from thee to my God!

[Undated.]

Before now my L. has lodged an indictment
against me in the high court of Friendship—
and I plead guilty to the charge, and entirely
submit to the mercy of that amiable tribunal.—
Let this mitigate my punishment, if it will not
expiate my transgression—do not say that I
shall offend again in the same manner, though
a too easy pardon sometimes occasions a repeti-
tion of the same fault.—A Miser says, Though I
do no good with my money to-day, to-morrow
shall be marked with some deed of beneficence.
—The Libertine says, Let me enjoy this week in
forbidden and luxurious pleasures, and the next
I will dedicate to serious thought and reflection.
—The Gamester says, Let me have one more
chance with the dice, and I will never touch
them more.—The Knave of every profession
wishes to obtain but independency, and he will
become an honest man.—The Female Coquette
triumphs in tormenting her innamorato, for fear,
after marriage, he should not pity her.

The apparition of the fifth instant (for letters
may almost be called so) proved more welcome
as I did not expect it. Oh! my L., thou art
kind indeed to make an apology for me, and
thou never wilt assuredly repent of one act of
kindness—for being thy debtor, I will repay
thee with interest.—Why does my L. complain

of the desertion of friends? Where does the human being live who will not join in this complaint? It is a common observation, and perhaps too true, that married people seldom extend their regards beyond their own fireside.—There is such a thing as parsimony in esteem, as well as money—yet, as one costs nothing, it might be bestowed with more liberality.—We cannot gather grapes from thorns, so we must not expect kind attachments from persons who are wholly folded up in selfish schemes. I do not know whether I most despise, or pity such characters—nature never made an unkind creature—ill usage, and bad habits, have deformed a fair and lovely creature.

My L. !—thou art surrounded by all the melancholy gloom of winter; wert thou alone, the retirement would be agreeable.—Disappointed ambition might envy such a retreat, and disappointed love would seek it out.—Crowded towns, and busy societies, may delight the unthinking and the gay—but solitude is the best nurse of wisdom. Methinks I see my contemplative girl now in the garden, watching the gradual approaches of spring.—Dost thou not mark with delight the first vernal buds? the snowdrop, and primrose, these early and welcome visitors, spring beneath thy feet.—Flora and Pomona already consider thee as their handmaid; and in a little time will load thee with their sweetest blessing.—The feathered race are all thy own, and with them untaught harmony will soon begin to cheer thy morning and evening walks.—Sweet as this may be,

return—return—the birds of Yorkshire will tune their pipes, and sing as melodiously as those of Staffordshire.

Adieu, my beloved L., thine too much for my *peace*.

[Undated.]

I have offended her whom I so tenderly love! —what could tempt me to it! but if a beggar was to knock at thy gate, would thou not open the door and be melted with compassion?—I know thou wouldst, for Pity has erected a temple in thy bosom.—Sweetest, and best of all human passions! let thy web of tenderness cover the pensive form of affliction, and soften the darkest shades of misery! I have reconsidered this apology, and, alas! what will it accomplish? Arguments, however finely spun, can never change the nature of things—very true—so a truce with them.

I have lost a very valuable friend by a sad accident, and, what is worse, he has left a widow and five young children to lament this sudden stroke.—If real usefulness and integrity of heart could have secured him from this, his friends would not now be mourning his untimely fate.—These dark and seemingly cruel dispensations of Providence often make the best of human hearts complain.—Who can paint the distress of an affectionate mother, made a widow in a moment, weeping in bitterness over a numerous, helpless, and fatherless offspring!—God! these are Thy chastisements, and require (hard talk) a pious acquiescence.

Forgive me this digression, and allow me to drop a tear over a departed friend ; and, what is more excellent, an honest man. My L. ! thou wilt feel all that kindness can inspire in the death of —— The event was sudden, and thy gentle spirit would be alarmed on that account.—But, my L., thou hast less to lament, as old age was creeping on, and her period of doing good and being useful was nearly over.—At sixty years of age the tenement gets fast out of repair, and the lodger with anxiety thinks of a discharge.—In such a situation the poet might well say,

“The soul, uneasy,” etc.

My L. talks of leaving the country—may a kind angel guide thy steps hither !—Solitude at length grows tiresome.—Thou sayest thou wilt quit the place with regret.—I think so too—Does not something uneasy mingle with the very reflection of leaving it ? It is like parting with an old friend, whose temper and company one has long been acquainted with.—I think I see you looking twenty times a day at the house—almost counting every brick and pane of glass, and telling them at the same time, with a sigh, you are going to leave them.—Oh happy modification of matter ! they will remain insensible of thy loss.—But how wilt thou be able to part with thy garden ?—The recollection of so many pleasing walks must have endeared it to you. The trees, the shrubs, the flowers, which thou reared with thy own hands—will they not droop and fade away sooner upon thy departure ?—

Who will be the successor to nurse them in thy absence?—Thou wilt leave thy name upon the myrtle-tree.—If trees, and shrubs, and flowers, could compose an elegy, I should expect a very plaintive one upon this subject.

Adieu, adieu! Believe me ever, ever thine.

A charming picture is drawn in these letters. The peaceful, happy home of Elizabeth and Laurence from which “the gloomy family of care and distress shall be banished,” “the choral songs of gratitude” that shall be raised when the twain are together! Who could resist the thought of the poor downcast lover, sighing at the gates of the deserted D’Estella—as Sterne called the cottage in Little Alice Lane—grateful for the attention of Fanny, the serving-maid, and pouring out his soul to the confidante, Miss S——. It is all so charming, it is so ingenuous, it is so sincere: it would be a scurvy knave indeed who could doubt the ingenuousness and the sincerity—of the charm there is no question. *Only*, in the light of Sterne’s subsequent amours, the question will protrude itself: was the sadness, the despair, the love itself, genuine? Did not the joy of composition carry the writer far beyond the true expression of his feelings? Mr. Sterne, it is to be feared, was an arrant humbug. He never addressed a letter to any woman—with exception of Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. James—that was not a love-letter, though, probably, he never loved in the whole course of

his life; he was always playing with love, and making believe—to himself as to the object of his affection—that he was in love. He loved not Elizabeth, nor Catherine de Fourmantelle, nor Mrs. Ferguson, nor Mrs. Vesey, nor the later and more famous Eliza, nor any woman he ever met; he was, and was proud to be, merely a man of sensibility.

Miss Lumley, in blissful ignorance of the character of her lover, as the correspondence shows, answered his letters, and even reproached him with not writing more regularly. In due course, in the early part of 1741, she returned to York, and, as Sterne relates, “fell into a consumption.” Convinced that she was to die she sent for Laurence, and one evening, when, to use his own words, he “was sitting by her as an almost broken heart to see her so ill,” she said, “My dear Laurey, I can never be yours, for I verily believe I have not long to live—but I have left you every shilling of my fortune,” and she showed him her will. “This generosity overpowered me,” said Laurence. “It pleased God that she recovered, and I married her.” That is Sterne’s account, and it may be accepted, for, with all his faults, such kindness would have touched him to the quick. Yet even upon this a doubt is thrown by John Croft, who has related, “She asked him the question herself, and they went off directly from the Rooms and were married.” This certainly suggests that Sterne’s

fancy was straying, or, at best, that he was in no hurry to push his good fortune to the end, and that Miss Lumley, in ignorance as to the reasons for his silence, and convinced of his devotion, brought him to the point. However, it came about, though they did not go off directly from the Rooms and get married, they were married on Easter Monday, March 30, 1741, in York Minster, the Dean, Richard Osbaldeston, conducting the ceremony.

CHAPTER IV

LIFE AT SUTTON VICARAGE

(1741—1760)

Sterne takes up his residence at Sutton Vicarage—He repairs the house and lays out the garden—Entries in the Parish Register—Sterne appointed Prebendary of Givendale—Resigns that for the Prebend of North Newbald—Presented to the living of Stillington—Chaplain to the Earl of Aboyne—Sterne's clerical duties—Preaches in York Minster—His relations with other clergymen—and with his parishioners—His theories as to what a sermon should be—Oratorical artifices—Accused of "scornful unbelief"—"The Sermons of Mr. Yorick"—Sterne asserts his sincerity—His amusements at Sutton—Music—Painting—Reading—Writing verses—"The Unknown World"—"Not steady to his pastimes"—Correspondence with the Rev. John Blake—His neighbours—Philip Harland—Lord Fauconberg—The Crofts of Stillington—Christopher Steele—George Romney—Sterne farms his own glebe—His failure as a farmer—The "Hay" letter.

AFTER his marriage Sterne went to live at Sutton, in the Forest of Galtres (which Sterne subsequently described as being "in a corner of the Kingdom"), where, for a while at least, most of his parochial duties had been performed by a curate. The parsonage house had been shamefully neglected by the previous incumbent, and was in so sad a state that, before the Rector could take his wife to reside there, he had at his own expense to make extensive repairs. Particulars of this undertaking, with some details of

the cost, were inserted in the Register Book of the parish.

Laid out in Sushing the House, 12*l.*, *A. Dom.* 1741.

In Stukoing and Brick-	£	s.	d.	} L. STERNE, Vicar.
ing the Hall	4	16	0	
In Building the Chair				
House	5	0	0	
In Building the Par				
Chimney	8	0	0	
Little House.	2	8	0	

Spent in shapeing the Rooms, plastering, Underdrawing, and Jobbing—God knows what.

Having put the house in order, Sterne turned his attention to the garden, and again the Parish Register supplies information :

Mem^d.—That the Cherry Trees and Espalier Apple Hedge were planted in the Gardens, October the 9, 1742. The Nectarines and Peaches planted the same Day. The Pails were set up two months before.

I laid out in the Garden in the year 1742, the sum of 8*l.* 15*s.* 6*d.*

L. STERNE.

Laid out in inclosing the Orchard, and in Apple Trees, etc. in the Year 1748, 5*l.* The Apple Trees, Pear and Plumb Trees, planted in the Orchard the 28th day of October, 1748, by

L. STERNE.

These statements seem out of place in such

a book, but Sterne sometimes used it as a journal, and in it recorded the following quaint observations :

In the Year 1741

Hail fell in the midst of Summer as big as a Pidgeon's egg, which unusual occurrence I thought fit to attest under my hand.

L. STERNE.

In May 1745

A dismal Storm of Hail fell upon this Town, and upon some adjacent ones, which did considerable damage both to the Windows and Corn. Many of the stones measured six inches in circumference. It broke almost all the South and West Windows both of this House and my Vicarage House at Stillington.

L. STERNE.

These entries, however, were but burlesques of earlier ones made by the ingenuous William Walker, a previous incumbent of Sutton. One of these may be given as a curiosity :

Upon ye 21st of April, in ye year of our Lord, 1698, did fall soe much snow that it made very nigh a ffoot in depth in sunsetting. Doubtless it must have been much deeper had not ye year caused the melting of much of it as it came. It came without wind ; on ye night following, soe sharp a ffrost succeeded, that I took up Ice out of an stone trough in ye church-yard, nigh an inch thick. The weather for a fortnight after was very severe and unhospitable. The

third day of May was a Tempestuous day of wind, snow, and rain, and the night was very frosty. About the back end of May or beginning of June, soe gt. a shower of Hail fell, that some of it lay unmelted for 24 hours after. There being soe unusual occurrences, I thought fit to attest ym under my hand.

WILL. WALKER, *Vicar*.

It would not have been possible for Sterne to have spent money on his house and gardens but for the fact that his fortunes had been steadily improving. So early as January 1740, while he was courting Elizabeth Lumley, his uncle's influence obtained for him the prebendal stall of Givendale in York Minster, worth about £85 a year. This brought his income up to £75, and it was increased to £115 on his marriage, for his wife generously declined to have her money settled on herself, and insisted on giving him the free use of it. One hundred and fifteen pounds a year was, in the mid-eighteenth century, no contemptible sum for a young clergyman; but soon Sterne's means were still further augmented. In January 1741 he was allowed to change the prebend of Givendale for that of North Newbald, which carried a stipend of £40 and a house in Stonegate at York, that could be used as a residence or leased. In the following year yet a further benefit was conferred upon him. Lord Fairfax, a friend of Elizabeth Lumley, had promised her that if she married

a clergyman he should have the reversion of the living of Stillington, two miles from Sutton, which was in his gift. The incumbent died soon after the marriage, the patron kept his promise, a dispensation for Sterne to hold both livings was obtained from the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sterne was inducted on March 18, 1748. The conditions under which he held the benefice under the dispensation were that he should preach thirteen sermons at each church during the year, that "in the benefice from which you shall happen to be most absent" he should nevertheless exercise hospitality two months yearly, and also therein appoint a curate, but this latter stipulation was to be carried out only "in case the Revenues of the said Church can conveniently maintain such minister."

In the dispensation Sterne is described as chaplain to the Earl of Aboyne, that is, the fourth Earl, who, born in 1726, succeeded to the title and estates in 1782. This is worthy of note because this fact suggests an explanation of the following passage in "Tristram Shandy":

My travels through Denmark with Mr. Noddy's eldest son, whom in the year 1741, I accompanied as governour riding along with him at a prodigious rate through most parts of Europe.

This, of course, may not be autobiographical,

but it is at least probable that, for a few months in the autumn of the year, Sterne acted as bearleader to the young Earl, being glad enough to earn some money to cover the expenses in connection with the repairing of Sutton rectory.

Of Sterne as a clergyman but little is known, save that he was a busy man. As Prebendary of North Newbald he had to take his turn in the Minster; and when not so engaged he preached every Sunday morning at Sutton, and as a rule walked over to Stillington to take the afternoon service. Probably he did his duty to his parishioners as well as the majority of the parsons of his day, but that is not necessarily according to him high praise, for the clergymen of the Church of England in the 'forties and 'fifties of the eighteenth century were apt to consider they had done all that was demanded of them if they preached regularly and attended the deathbeds of members of their flock. If the Rector of Sutton did more than this, and it is at least probable that he was charitable, let it be counted unto him for righteousness.

It has been remarked in a previous chapter that Sterne's wit made him many enemies among his professional brethren, and his repute among them was not increased when it became known that he was, as will presently be shown, a member of that body of *viveurs* known as Demoniacs; but though they could not look upon him with a favourable eye, they were,

according to John Croft, generous enough to regard him not as wicked, but as crackbrained *—which argues more for their hearts than their intelligence. Yet some of Sterne's actions may well have amazed the neighbouring clergy, as well as scandalised them. For instance, one Sunday, when he was walking over the fields from Sutton to Stillington, where he was to preach, it chanced that his pointer dog sprung a covey of partridges; whereupon he returned to Sutton for his gun, and, as the narrator says, left his flock, that was waiting for him, in the lurch.† Conduct such as this made him so unpopular at Sutton and Stillington—again the authority is John Croft—that when one day he was skating on the Car at Stillington, and the ice broke, not one of his parishioners went to his assistance.

Sterne's intimacy with the Demoniacs and the indelicacy so frequently evinced in "Tristram Shandy" have led most writers to declare that he was singularly out of place as a clergyman; but, while it would not be easy to dissent from this conclusion, it is but fair to the great humorist to insist on the fact that there has never been put forward the slightest proof that he neglected his clerical duties, at least during the earlier years he was at Sutton. "He decently lived a becoming ornament of the Church," says Hall-Stevenson, "till his Rabe-

* *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 231.

† *Ibid.*, p. 230.

laisian spirit, which issued from the press, immersed him into the gaieties and frivolities of the world." He preached regularly in those days, and devoted much time and thought to the preparation of his sermons, though, according to Croft, he was far from a success, for his delivery and voice were so very disagreeable that when he entered the pulpit at the Minster half the congregation usually left the building.* This statement, however, like all Croft's comments on Sterne, must be discounted, for, if Sterne was such a failure, how did it come to pass that he should be chosen to preach before the judges during the summer assizes, or to deliver the sermon in aid of the charity-schools at York ?

If the delivery was poor, the matter was certainly good. Sterne had very definite theories as to what sermons should be and what they should not be, and more than once he laid down the law on the subject.

"To preach to show the extent of our reading or the subtleties of our wit ; to parade in the eyes of the vulgar with the beggarly accounts of a little learning, tinsel'd over with a few words which glitter, but convey little light and less warmth—is a dishonest use of the poor single half hour in a week which is put into our hands : 'tis not preaching the Gospel, but ourselves. For my own part," continued Yorick,

* *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 230.

"I had rather direct five words pointblank to the heart." *

Nothing could be more sound than this, which is but an elaboration of the soldier's creed—the service is all, the man nothing.

"I like the sermon well; 'tis dramatic—and there is something in that way of writing, when skilfully managed, which catches the attention." †

Thus the elder Shandy is made to comment on the discourse on the text, "For we trust we have a good conscience," introduced into the second volume of "*Tristram Shandy*." If you would attract the attention of your congregation, said Sterne in effect, you must strike a distinctive note. The best sermon ever written by the most holy man that has ever lived must fail utterly if those to whom it is addressed are not attentive, and the regular churchgoer—and in Sterne's day most people in the country were regular in their attendance—requires something out of the way to compel him to listen to what is being said from the pulpit.

I have taken the Liberty to inscribe this Discourse to you, in Testimony of the great Respect which I owe to your Character in general; and from a sense of what is due to it

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. IV. ch. xxv.

† *Ibid.*, Vol. II. ch. xvii.

in particular from every member of the Church of York [so runs the dedication of his sermon, "The Case of Elijah," to Dean Osbaldeston]. I wish I had as good a Reason for doing that, which has given me the opportunity of making so publick and just an Acknowledgment ; being afraid there can be little left to be said upon the Subject of Charity which has not been often thought, and much better express'd, by many who have gone before. And indeed, it seems so beaten and common a Path, that it is not an easy Matter for a new comer to distinguish himself in it, by any thing except the Novelty of his *Vehicle*. -

On April 5th, 1761 [Sterne wrote on March 25, 1761, to Mr. Whatley, Treasurer of the Foundling Hospital, where he had been invited to preach], and sure as the day comes, and as sure as the Foundling Hospital stands, will I—(that is, in case I stand myself) discharge my conscience of my promise in giving you, not a half-hour (not a poor half-hour), for I never could preach so long without fatiguing both myself and my flock to death—but I will give you a short sermon, and slap you in my turn:—preaching (you must know) is a theological slap upon the heart, as the dunning for a promise is a political slap upon the memory:—both the one and the other is useless where men have *wit enough* to be honest. This makes for my hypothesis of wit and judgment.

It has been argued that Sterne carried to extremes his efforts to attract the attention of

his hearers, and those who hold this view support their contention by a reference to the sermon, "The House of Feasting and the House of Mourning," on the text from Ecclesiastes vii. 2, 8, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting." This began in a manner sufficiently startling to rivet the attention of the most inattentive.

That I deny—but let us hear the wise man's reasoning upon it—for *that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart: sorrow is better than laughter*—for a crackbrain'd order of Carthusian monks, I grant, but not for men of the world: For what purpose, do you imagine, has God made us? for the social sweets of the well-water'd vallies, where he has planted us, or for the dry and dismal desert of a *Sierra Morena*? Are the sad accidents of life, and the uncheery hours which perpetually overtake us, are they not enough, but we must sally forth in quest of them,—belye our own hearts and say as your text would have us, that they are better than those of joy? Did the Best of Beings send us into the world for this end—to go weeping through it,—to vex and shorten a life short and vexatious enough already? Do you think, my good Preacher, that He who is infinitely happy can envy us our enjoyments? or that a Being so infinitely kind would grudge a mournful traveller the short rest and refreshments necessary to support his spirits through the stages of a weary pilgrimage? or that He would call him to a severe reckoning, because in his way

he had hastily snatched at some little fugacious pleasures, merely to sweeten this uneasy journey of life, and reconcile him to the ruggedness of the road, and the many hard justlings he is sure to meet with? Consider, I beseech you, what provision and accommodation the Author of our being has prepared for us, that we might not go on our way sorrowing—how many caravanseras of rest—what powers and faculties He has given us for taking it—what apt objects He has placed in our way to entertain us;—some of which He has made so fair, so exquisitely fitted for this end, that they have power over us for a time to charm away the sense of pain, to cheer up the dejected heart under poverty and sickness, and make it go and remember its miseries no more.

It is easy to imagine, first, the amazement and then, the consternation of the members of the congregation, clerics and laymen alike, who may well have doubted the evidence of their senses. It is certain that there was at this moment no inattention at York Minster, and that every word of the divine who apparently denied his text was listened to breathlessly. But, of course, it was only an apparent denial. Sterne was merely putting forward the worldling's arguments; and if he started thus dramatically, at least he ended with a decorous and eloquent peroration.

Turn in hither, I beseech you, for a moment. Behold a dead man ready to be carried out; the

only son of his mother, and she a widow! Perhaps a more affecting spectacle—a kind and indulgent father of a numerous family, lies breathless—snatched away in the strength of his age—torn in an evil hour from his children and the bosom of a disconsolate wife!

Behold much people of the city gathered together to mix their tears, with settled sorrow in their looks, going heavily along to the house of mourning, to perform that last melancholy office which, when the debt of nature is paid, we are called upon to pay to each other.

If this sad occasion which leads him there has not done it already, take notice, to what a serious and devout frame of mind every man is reduced the moment he enters this gate of affliction. The busy and fluttering spirits, which in the house of mirth were wont to transport him from one diverting object to another—see how they are fallen! how peaceably they are laid! In this gloomy mansion full of shades and uncomfortable damps to seize the soul—see, the light and easy heart, which never knew what it was to think before, how pensive it is now, how soft, how susceptible, how full of religious impressions, how deeply it is smitten with sense and with a love of virtue! Could we, in this crisis, whilst this empire of reason and religion lasts, and the heart is thus exercised with wisdom and busied with heavenly contemplations—could we see it naked as it is—stripped of its passions, unspotted by the world, and regardless of its pleasures—we might then safely rest our cause upon this single evidence,

and appeal to the most sensual, Whether Solomon has not made a just determination here; in favour of the house of mourning?—not for its own sake, but as it is fruitful in virtue, and becomes the occasion of so much good. Without this end, sorrow, I own, has no use but to shorten a man's days—nor can gravity, with all its studied solemnity of look and carriage, serve any end but to make one half of the world merry, and impose upon the other.

Whether this oratorical artifice was justifiable is a question that may be left to others to argue; but undoubtedly with Sterne it did not fail in its purpose. This is an extreme instance, but perhaps even this finds its justification in that were sermons more carefully prepared, and were those that are carefully prepared less in the nature of essays and more in the manner of addresses, congregations would attend more diligently to utterances from the pulpit.

As old Isaac D'Israeli mentioned seventy years ago, it has frequently been stated that Sterne's sermons are characterised by an air of levity, and probably this charge could be traced back to the well-known letter of Gray, written in June 1760, shortly after the publication of the first collection of the sermons.

Have you read his Sermons (with his own comic figure at the head of them?) [he inquired of Thomas Warton in July 1760]. They are in the style, I think, most proper for the pulpit,

and shew a very strong imagination and a sensible heart; but you see him often tottering on the verge of laughter, and ready to throw his periwig in the face of his audience.*

The last phrase had been remembered and the rest forgotten, by which a great injustice has been done to Sterne. What justification was there for this assault? It may be further asked, What justification was there for Thackeray's remark?—"Of course any man is welcome to believe as he likes for me, except a *parson*, and I can't help looking upon Swift and Sterne as a couple of traitors and renegades."† Where are the indications of "blasphemy" and "scornful unbelief" that Thackeray thought he found in Sterne's letters and writings? There is, it is true, a letter addressed to John Hall-Stevenson that concludes:

Be in peace and charity with all mankind.

And the blessing of God the Father

Son

&

Holy Ghost be with you.

Amen.

L. STERNE.

This is certainly in bad taste, but it would be a harsh judge who, on the strength of this single instance, would set down the writer as a

* Gray: *Letters* (ed. Gosse), Vol. III. p. 53.

† Letter to T. W. Gibbs, September 21, 1851 (British Museum MSS. 34527).

blasphemer. Nothing remains in the memory so long as a good story, apocryphal or real, and a story has been circulated that may well have kept alive the charge against Sterne of religious insincerity. "Sterne, being in company with three or four clergymen, was relating a circumstance which happened to him at York," so the tale goes. "After preaching at the Cathedral, an old woman, whom he observed sitting on the pulpit stairs, stopped him as he came down, and begged to know where she should have the honour of hearing him preach the next Sunday. Sterne, having mentioned the place where he was to exhibit, found her situated in the same manner on that day, when she put the same question to him as before. The following Sunday he was to preach four miles out of York, which he told her; and, to his great surprise, he found her there too, and the same question was put to him as he descended from the pulpit. 'On which,' he added, 'I took for my text those words, expecting to find the old woman as before: I will grant the request of this poor widow, lest by her often coming she weary me.' One of the company immediately replied, 'Why, Sterne, you omitted the most applicable part of the passage, which is, "Though I neither fear God, nor regard man!"' "

If Sterne was a scornful unbeliever surely some trace of this must have crept, sooner or later, into one of his sermons, yet not the most

virulent critic has ventured to announce any such discovery. When the Sermons were published in book-form, the reviewers almost without exception praised them highly, and found nothing to blame except the publication in Yorick's name. "Would any man believe that a preacher was in earnest, who should mount the pulpit in a harlequin's coat?" they asked. This, of course, was an allusion to the fact that they were issued as "The Sermons of Mr. Yorick." Who, we wonder, was the clergyman, described by Sterne as "one of the first of our own Church," and as one "for whose candour and paternal sentiments I have the highest veneration," who mistook this Yorick for the other still more famous personage of the same name?

"He could not bear," he said, "to look into sermons wrote by the King of Denmark's jester." "Good, my lord," said I; "but there are two Yoricks. The Yorick your Lordship thinks of has been dead and buried eight hundred years ago; he flourished in Horwendillus's court;—the other Yorick is myself, who have flourished, my Lord, in no court."—He shook his head.—"Good God!" said I, "you might as well confound Alexander the Great with Alexander the Coppersmith, my Lord."—"Twas all one," he replied.—

—"If Alexander, King of Macedon, could have translated your Lordship," said I, "I'm sure your Lordship would not have said so."*

* *A Sentimental Journey*—"The Passport."

Many persons resented the name of "Yorick" on the title-page of the Sermons as outraging the proprieties, and, though it is easy to lay too much stress on the matter, it must be admitted it would have been more dignified in Sterne to have issued them in his own name. Sterne, however, had in 1747 printed his sermon on "The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath consider'd," and three years later that on "The Abuses of Conscience"; but these had attracted no attention. When the latter sermon was introduced into "Tristram Shandy" every one read and admired it, and then Caleb Whitefoord said that if Sterne had any more sermons like this, "if you could hit on a striking title they would go down." "I have it!" cried the clergyman. "'Dramatic Sermons of Yorick.'" With difficulty he was induced to drop this allusion to the church and the playhouse.* It is but fair, however, to let Sterne speak for himself.

The Sermon which gave rise to the publication of these, having been offered to the world as a sermon of *Yorick's*, I hope the most serious reader will find nothing to offend him in my continuing these volumes under the same title: lest it should be otherwise, I have added a second title-page with the real name of the Author—the first will serve the bookseller's purpose, as *Yorick's* name is, possibly of the two,

* Isaac D'Israeli: *Literary Miscellanies*.

more known ;—and the second will ease the minds of those who see a jest, and the danger which lurks under it, where no jest was meant.

I suppose it is needless to inform the Public that the reason of printing these Sermons arises altogether from the favourable reception which the Sermon given as a sample of them in “Tristram Shandy” met with from the world ; —That Sermon was printed by itself some years ago, but could find neither purchasers nor readers ; so that I apprehended little hazard from a promise I made upon its republication, “That if the Sermon was liked, these should be also at the world’s ‘service’” ; which, to be as good as my word, they here are, and I pray to God they may do it the service I wish.

There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of these words, the substance of which he repeated more than once : “As the Sermons turn chiefly upon philanthropy, and those kindred virtues to it, I trust they will be no less felt, or worse received, for the evidence they bear of proceeding more from the heart than the head,” he wrote in the preface to the first two volumes ; and, seven years later, he told Eliza Draper : “The sermons came all hot from the heart. The others [*i.e.* the volumes containing ‘Tristram Shandy’] came from the head—I am more indifferent about their reception.” Many people recognised in them the hall-mark of this sincerity ; and, to take one example, Georgina, Countess Cowper, wrote to Mrs. Dawes shortly

after the appearance of the first series : " Pray read *Yorick's* sermons (though *you would not read 'Tristram Shandy'*). They are more like essays. I like them extremely, and I think he must be a good man." *

During the nineteen years Sterne lived at Sutton, his amusements, as, indeed, he has put on record, were " books, painting, fiddling, and shooting "; but his constitution, like that of all his father's children, was weak, and perforce he indulged more in indoor than in outdoor pleasures. Yet he was in his earlier years more fond of sport than of any other pursuit, though strangely enough there is in "*Tristram Shandy*" little reference to his shooting or his skating. On the other hand, from that same book can be culled numerous allusions to music and painting. Sterne loved to play his bass-viol, and seems to have had knowledge as well as appreciation of music. He spent, too, many agreeable hours with his brushes and pencils. None of his paintings have come down to posterity, but two of his sketches have been preserved : one, a villainous caricature of his wife ; the other, a more kindly portrait of his York friend, Thomas Bridges, in the dress of a quack doctor—the portrait of Sterne as a clown in the same drawing is generally attributed to Bridges. To Sterne have also been credited the illustrations to the 1772 edition of the poems of Michael

* Mrs. Delany : *Autobiography*, Vol. III. p. 602.

Wodhull; but the report is unsubstantiated by any credible evidence, and it is probable that the artist was Lewis Stern, whose acquaintance, it may be mentioned, Laurence made in his later days.

Books were always a joy to Sterne, and though it has become the custom to assert that his reading was mainly done when he was staying with his friend Hall-Stevenson at Skelton Castle, there is no reason to assume that he was without books at Sutton. When he removed to Coxwold, money being then more plentiful, he increased his store. "I have bought seven hundred books at a purchase dog cheap—and many good," he mentioned in a letter to Hall-Stevenson, dated July 28, 1760; "and I have been a week getting them set up in my best room here." It is a curious fact, and one hitherto not commented upon, that while "Tristram Shandy" abounds in references to authors and their works, there is not in Sterne's letters a single mention of a writer or a book.

Sometimes Sterne amused himself with the composition of verses, and there have been preserved some lines called, "The Unknown World," with the sub-title, "Verses occasion'd by hearing a Pass-Bell," in which he used a sort of shorthand, ○ standing for the world; Ɂ for God, 8 for Heaven, and ʒ for the soul, and various abbreviations, such as fr^d for friend, yy for they, and so on.

Written out in full, the poem runs :

"Hark, my gay Friend, the solemn Toll
Speaks the departure of a soul ;
'Tis gone, that's all we know—not where
Or how the unbody'd soul do's fare.

In that mysterious world none knows,
But God alone, to whom it goes ;
To whom departed souls return
To take their Doom to smile or mourn,

Oh ! by what glimmering light we view
The unknown world we're hast'ning to !
God has look'd up the mystic Page,
And curtain'd darkness round the stage !
Wise Heaven to render search perplex
Has drawn 'twixt this world and the next
A dark impenetrable screen
All behind which is yet unseen !

We talk of Heaven, we talk of Hell,
But what they mean no tongue can tell !
Heaven is the realm where angels are,
And Hell the chaos of despair.

But what these awful truths imply
None of us know before we die !
Whether we will or no, we must
Take the succeeding world on trust.

This hour perhaps our Friend is well,
Death-struck, the next, he cries, Farewell !
I die !—and yet for aught we see,
Ceases at once to breathe and be.

Thus launch'd from life's ambiguous shore,
Ingulph'd in Death, appears no more,
Then undirected to repair
To distant worlds, we know not where.

Swift flies the soul ; perhaps 'tis gone
A thousand leagues beyond the sun,
Or twice ten thousand more thrice told,
Ere the forsaken clay is cold !

And yet who knows if Friends we lov'd,
Tho' dead, may be so far remov'd ?
Only the veil of flesh between,
Perhaps they watch us, though unseen.

Whilst we, their loss lamenting, say,
They're out of hearing, far away ;
Guardians to us, perhaps they're near,

Concealed in vehicles of air,
 And yet no notices they give
 Nor tell us where, nor how they live ;
 Tho' conscious, whilst with us below,
 How much themselves desired to know ;
 As if bound up by solemn fate
 To keep the secret of their state,
 To tell their joys or pains to none,
 That man might live by Faith alone.

Well, let my Sovereign, if He please,
 Lock up His marvellous decrees ;
 Why should I wish Him to reveal
 What He thinks proper to conceal ?

It is enough that I believe
 Heaven 's brighter than I can conceive :
 And he that makes it all his care
 To serve God here shall see Him there !

But oh ! what worlds shall I survey
 The moment that I leave this clay ?
 How sudden the surprise, how new !
 Let it, my God, be happy too."

John Croft mentions that Sterne was "not steady to his pastimes and recreations," that at one time he would be all agog with excitement at the prospect of shooting, and at another time could not be induced to leave his drawing-board or his canvas. Croft evidently regarded this merely as an instance of his friend's instability of character ; but it would perhaps be more accurate to deduce from this the facts that Sterne had not yet found himself, and that he was bored to death while staying at Sutton. It will presently be shown that his wife was no companion for him, and it is obvious that a man of his intellect can scarcely have found congenial spirits among his country neighbours. He was, however, on friendly terms with the



MRS. LAURENCE STERNE.

(See p. 48.)

*From a drawing in crayons by Francis Coles
(in the possession of the Rev. Canon Blenkin).*

TO THE
AMERICAN

Rev. John Blake, head master of the Royal Grammar School at York, and there is proof of this intimacy in the following letter, one of a series of letters exchanged concerning Blake's wish to win the hand of a Miss Ash.

DEAR BLAKE,

It is not often, if ever, I differ much from you in my judgment of things, therefore you must bear with me now in remonstrating against the impropriety of my coming just at this *crisis*. You have happily now concluded this affair w^{ch} has been so often upon the eve of breaking off, and my coming w^d be the most *unseasonable* visit ever paid by mortal man. Consider in what light Mrs. and Miss Ash must have hitherto look't upon me, and should it ever come to light that I had posted over upon this termination of y^r differences, I know it would naturally alarm them and raise a suspicion I had come over to embroil matters; things being already settled, 'twould be thought I could have no other errand. But you seem to have a foreboding of the same evil by y^r desiring me to come *privately*: I have weighed the point with my wife a full hour, and she thinks we should not stake the disgust y^t may possibly be given upon the *chance* of my coming being kept a secret, for if I come to-night I must stay all night, w^{ch} will discover it. If to-morrow morning, both roads and streets will be full, as 'tis Martinmas Day, and I declare I would not have my being with you known over the way for fifty pounds. I am y^r friend, and wish and

resolve to be a friend to y^r lady who is y^r. So I beg and beseech you, do not expose me to the hazard of any disgust, w^{ch} if any future rub sh^d lay in the way, will in course be attributed to me from this uncritical conference you wish. I know you will do me the justice to believe, I would run 7 times as far any other road to do you a 7th part of the kindness you ask. But I verily believe, w^{ch} by the by, makes me easy at heart in my present staying at home, that you will do as well without me. If I can be of service it must be in case some unforeseen objections sh^d arise in either party, when you may whistle me to you in a moment's warning. However, my dear friend, if after all you think it necessary for you that we should have an hour's talk, I will give up my own judgm^t to y^r and come over early to-morrow morning—tho' I rather wish, as does my wife, you would be ruled by us, and depend upon y^r own good abilities w^{ch} I'm sure are sufficient to carry you thro' now with *safety* and honor. I send my service to no mortal soul, and pray command y^r people to say nothing of y^r lad's being here to-day. I wish to God you could come some day—ride out next week and breakfast and dine with us, w^{ch} if you do it would be wise in my opinion to make *no secret* of it, but tell the ladies you are going to take a ride to Sutton to carry the welcome news to y^r friends, that everything was happily concluded. Dear sir, accept our most hearty congratulations upon it and believe me

Y^r most truly,

LAU^r STERNE.

P.S. My serv^t is in town to-night and will be in town to-morrow, when I will order him to wait upon you. I had collected all y^r letters and burnt them before I read y^r.*

As to his neighbour the Squire of Sutton, Philip Harland, "I cannot say," Sterne wrote, "we were upon a very friendly footing"; but their relations were presumably not so strained as has been represented, since Sterne presented him in 1747 with a copy of his sermon, "The case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath consider'd." Later they joined forces when their interests dictated, as in the matter of enclosures. With Lord Fauconberg at Newburgh Priory, Sterne had some acquaintance. Indeed, Lord Fauconberg became his patron, appointing him Commissary of Alne and Tollerton in December 1750, and ten years later presenting him to the living of Coxwold. Sterne's most intimate friends at this time were the Crofts of Stillington, who, he says, "shewed us every kindness—'twas most agreeable to be within a mile and a half of an amiable family, who were ever cordial friends." Stephen Croft, a married man, was the head of the family, and with him resided his brother John, subsequently well-known as an antiquary, but who, soon after Sterne became a frequent visitor at Stephen's table, left

* From the original letter in the possession of Adrian H. Joline, Esq., of New York.

England for Oporto, where he spent several years as a partner in the wine business founded by his father. When John returned to this country, he found the erstwhile undistinguished clergyman a personage "much taken up in the gay World," which "made a wide gap in our intimacy." He did not see much of the author of "Tristram Shandy" in these years, but what he remembered of him, and what he heard, he jotted down at the request of Caleb Whitefoord—these notes are of considerable value to the biographer of Sterne, though their value is largely discounted by a certain streak of malice underlying them.

In one of the last years of his residence at Sutton, probably in 1756, Sterne made the acquaintance of an artist named Christopher Steele, who painted his portrait. The story goes that, when he was in Steele's studio, he was so struck with the talent of the artist's apprentice that, much to the master's chagrin, he expressed a desire that the portrait should be painted by the apprentice. The name of the apprentice was George Romney. Romney subsequently not only twice painted Sterne's portrait, but also painted some scenes from "Tristram Shandy."

Though farming has been placed among the amusements of the Vicar of Sutton, it should more correctly be placed among his occupations, since he indulged in it less for pleasure than

with the desire to augment his income. But, though farming was then more profitable than now, the Sternes were not successful in this venture. "They kept a Dairy Farm at Sutton, had seven milch cows," says John Croft; "but they always sold their Butter cheaper than their Neighbours, as they had not the least idea of economy, [so] that they were always behind-hand and in arrears with Fortune." Yet Sterne worked hard, and did not lose heart; but in spite of all the attention he gave to farming, he was unable to bring his own affairs to a satisfactory pecuniary conclusion.

You are much to blame if you dig for marle, unless you are sure of it. I was once such a puppy myself, as to pare, and burn, and had my labour for my pains, and two hundred pounds out of pocket [he wrote to a friend on September 19, 1767]. Curse on farming (said I), I will try if the pen will not succeed better than the spade. The following up of that affair (I mean farming) made me lose my temper, and a cart load of turnips was (I thought) very dear at two hundred pounds. In all your operations may your own good sense guide you—bought experience is the devil.

If Sterne did not make any profit as a farmer, it is probable he did not sustain any heavy loss, and that he was regarded as a capable man of business by one at least of his

acquaintance is made clear by the following letter.

SIR,

I received the favour of yours ; and it will be a great pleasure to me to discharge the neighbourly office you stand in want of to your satisfaction. I have taken proper measures to get chapmen for it, by ordering it to be publicly cried at my two parishes ; but I find a greater backwardness amongst my two flocks in this respect than I imagined. This is owing, it seems, to a greater prospect of hay and other fodder than there was any expectation of about five weeks ago, when, they tell me, your crop would have sold for 40s. more than at present. I believe there may be some grounds for this ; for all the late-mowed meadows produce plenty, of which yours (which was cut last Saturday) will be no unacceptable proof ; for, they say, you have as much grass as they could well mow : so that, by their account, the want of the fodder raised the value of the crop. It is now with the utmost difficulty, and a whole morning's waste of my lungs, that I have got two sufficient men of * * * * * to bid up to what you had offered—twelve pounds. I have put them off under pretence of writing you word ; but, in truth, to wait a day or two to try the market, and see what can be got for it. I therefore beg you will write me a line or two for farther directions, which must come soon, for the barley, they inform me, must be cut on Friday or Saturday ; so there is no time to lose. If I hear nothing from you, I have but two

things to chuse, either to set men to mow it for you, or let the men who bid the most for it take it; though I fear the two men have bid near all I can get you. I beg my compliments, with my wife, to your lady; and I am, Sir, with great esteem, yours,

L. STERNE.

CHAPTER V

STERNE AND THE "DEMONIACS"

John Hall-Stevenson at Jesus College, Cambridge—His friendship with Sterne—His marriage—Skelton Castle—Hall-Stevenson's comparative poverty—Hall-Stevenson a friend of Wilkes and the "Monks of Medmenham"—The "Demoniacs"—Zachary Moore—Sir Francis Dashwood—Rev. Robert Lascelles—"Don Pringello"—William Hewett, Garland, Scroope, and others—Colonel Hall—Andrew Irvine—Charles Lee—The faults of the "Demoniacs"—And a defence of them—The character of Hall-Stevenson—Sterne's affection for him—Hall-Stevenson's parody of "Tristram Shandy"—and his continuation of "A Sentimental Journey"—"Crazy Tales."

"TWAS at Jesus College, Cambridge," Sterne wrote in the last year of his life, "I commenced a friendship with Mr. H——, which has been most lasting on both sides." This "Mr. H.——" was the notorious John Hall, who added to his patronymic the name of Stevenson, after his marriage in 1739 with an heiress Anne, daughter of Ambrose Stevenson, of Manor House, in the parish of Lanchester, County Durham. Born in 1718, the second son of Joseph Hall, counsellor-at-law of Durham, by his wife, Catherine, eldest daughter of Edward Trotter, of Skelton Castle, near Guisborough, John Hall-Stevenson, to call him by the name by which he is best known, went in his eighteenth year to the

University, for which, though he did not there distinguish himself, he cherished to the end of his days a sincere regard. "I should recommend Cambridge as a place infinitely preferable to the Temple," he wrote to his eldest grandson on February 17, 1785, "and particularly on account of the connexions you may form with young gentlemen of your own age, of the first rank, men that you must live with hereafter: it is the only time of life to make lasting, honourable, and useful friendships. These advantages were lost to me and blasted by premature marriage; the scantiness of my fortune forced me to vegetate in the country, and precluded me from every laudable pursuit suggested by ambition."

The friendship between Sterne and Hall-Stevenson must have been of rapid growth, as Hall-Stevenson went to Jesus College in June 1785, and Sterne left the University when he took his degree in the following January. Hall-Stevenson had been, no doubt accurately, described as a very precocious lad, with Rabelaisian tastes, and again and again his influence with Sterne has been made an excuse for the humourist's lapses from morality and decency. This, however, is most unfair, for when the young men became acquainted Hall-Stevenson was only seventeen years of age, whereas Sterne was two-and-twenty. However, be this as it may, of their intimacy at this time there is no doubt,

and tradition tells how they studied together—it would be interesting, in the light of subsequent events, to know what they studied. They called each other “cousin,” though the relationship, if any, was most remote. “Cousin Anthony Shandy,” Hall-Stevenson in days to come signed himself, and Sterne, in the famous dog-Latin letter written a few months before he died, addressed him : “*Mi consobrine, consobronis meis omnibus carior.*”

Hall-Stevenson remained at Cambridge until 1738, then went abroad for a year, and on his return made the “premature marriage” to which allusion has been made. When he and Sterne met again is a problem not easy to solve. Sterne, writing to Bishop Warburton in June 1760, mentioned that he did not know Hall-Stevenson’s handwriting : “From a nineteen years’ total interruption of all correspondence with him,” he said, “I had forgot his hand.” Since Sterne is so precise in giving the number of years, it would seem as if he and his college-friend had written to each other until 1741, and that in that year the youthful intimacy, after the manner of its kind, had lapsed. Probably for some years they may have drifted apart, but there is an abundance of evidence to show that, long before 1760, they were again on the best terms.

The threads of the college friendship, it has generally been stated, were gathered together

when Skelton Castle came into the possession of Hall-Stevenson, who thenceforth resided there. As to when this happened the writers on Sterne only agree in remarking that it was not until after 1745, in which year, after the rebellion, Lawson Trotter, the owner of the castle, and a noted Jacobite, fled the country: some say that then the property passed to his sister, Hall-Stevenson's mother, and at her death to her son; others, that it passed direct to the nephew as the next in entail. All these statements are inaccurate. Lawson Trotter sold Skelton Castle to Joseph Hall in 1727, and Hall-Stevenson, his elder brother having died in childhood, inherited the estate at the death of his father six years later.

Skelton Castle, which is believed to date back before the Conquest, had been added to, a square tower here, a round tower there, by many of its occupiers—Bruces, Cowpers, Trotters—until, when it came into the hands of Hall-Stevenson, it was a quaint patchwork edifice, erected on a platform supported by two buttressed terraces, which raised it high above the surrounding moat. Hall-Stevenson, amused by the picture presented by its medley of architectural styles, christened it "Crazy Castle," and wrote some humorous verses descriptive of it, well worthy to be preserved, especially as they are almost the only lines from his pen that can be printed in this respectable age.

"There is a Castle in the North,
 Seated upon a swampy clay,
 At present but of little worth,
 In former times it had its day.

"This ancient Castle is call'd CRAZY,
 Whose mould'ring walks a moat environs,
 Which moat goes heavily and lazy,
 Like a poor prisoner in irons."

Skelton Castle was at this date more than half ruined, as the owner was at some pains to indicate :

"Many a time I've stood and thought,
 Seeing the boat upon this ditch,
 It look'd as if it had been brought
 For the amusement of a Witch,
 To sail amongst applauding frogs,
 With water-rats, dead cats and dogs.

"The boat so leaky is, and old,
 That if you're fanciful and merry,
 You may conceive, without being told,
 That it resembles Charon's wherry.

"A turrit also you may note,
 Its glory vanish'd like a dream,
 Transform'd into a pigeon-coat,
 Nodding beside the sleepy stream.

"From whence, by steps with moss o'ergrown,
 You mount upon a terrace high,
 Where stands that heavy pile of stone,
 Irregular and all awry.

"If many a buttress did not reach
 A kind and salutary hand,
 Did not encourage, and beseech,
 The terrace and the house to stand,
 Left to themselves, and at a loss,
 They'd tumble down into the foss.

"Over the Castle hangs a tow'r,
Threat'ning destruction ev'ry hour;
Where owls, and bats, and the jackdaw,
Their Vespers and their Sabbath keep,
All night scream horribly, and caw,
And snore all day in horrid sleep.

"Oft at the quarrels and the noise
Of scolding maids or idle boys,
Myriads of rooks rise up and fly,
Like legions of damn'd souls,
As black as coals,
That foul and darken all the sky."

Hall-Stevenson was, as has been remarked, a poor man, and could not afford to undertake the task of repairing the vast building, though once he thought of making an effort to do so. When Sterne heard of this he wrote protesting against any interference with the fine old structure, and seasoned his letter with a touch of worldly wisdom that comes quaintly from him.

But what art thou meditating with axes and hammers?—"I know the pride and the naughtiness of thy heart," and thou lovest the sweet visions of architraves, friezes, and pediments with their tympanums, and thou hast found out a pretence, *à raison de cinq livres sterling* to be laid out in four years, etc., etc. (so as not to be felt, which is always added by the d—l as a bait) to justify thyself unto thyself.—It may be very wise to do this—but 'tis wiser to keep one's money in one's pocket, whilst there are wars without and rumours of wars within. St. — advises his disciples to sell both coat and

waistcoat—and go rather without shirt or sword, than leave no money in their scrip to go to Jerusalem with.—Now those *quatre ans consécutifs*, my dear Anthony, are the most precious morsels in thy *life to come* (in this world), and thou wilt do well to enjoy that morsel without cares, calculations, and curses, and damns, and debts—for as sure as stone is stone, and mortar is mortar, etc., 'twill be one of the many works of thy repentance—But, after all, if the Fates have decreed it, as you and I have some time supposed it on account of your generosity, “*that you are never to be a monied man*,” the decree will be fulfilled whether you adorn your castle and line it with cedar, and paint it within side and without side with vermilion, or not—*et cela étant* (having a bottle of Frontiniac and glass at my right hand) I drink, dear Anthony, to thy health and happiness, and to the final accomplishments of all thy lunary and sublunary projects.

Notwithstanding this sage counsel, Hall-Stevenson called in an architect, presently to be referred to as “Don Pringello,” who, to his credit, declined to tamper with the building, and succeeded in inducing the owner to abandon the plan of reconstruction.

Hall-Stevenson from time to time visited London, and made acquaintance with Horace Walpole and John Wilkes, and also with Sir Francis Dashwood, who introduced him to the “Monks of Medmenham” and gave him a taste

for politics, that afterwards found vent in some satirical verses. Lack of means, however, prevented his taking any considerable part in metropolitan gaieties, and he lived most of his life on his estate, making an occasional stay at Scarborough or some other northern watering-place. At Skelton, he, as William Hutton happily phrased it, "kept a full-spread board, and wore down the steps of his cellar." Steeped in Rabelaisian literature, he caught something of the spirit of the books he had perused; and, inspired by the example of the deceased Duke of Wharton and of his friend Dashwood, he gathered round him a body of men with similar tastes, and founded, in imitation of the Hell-fire Club and the Monks of Medmenham, a society which has passed into history as the "Demoniacs."

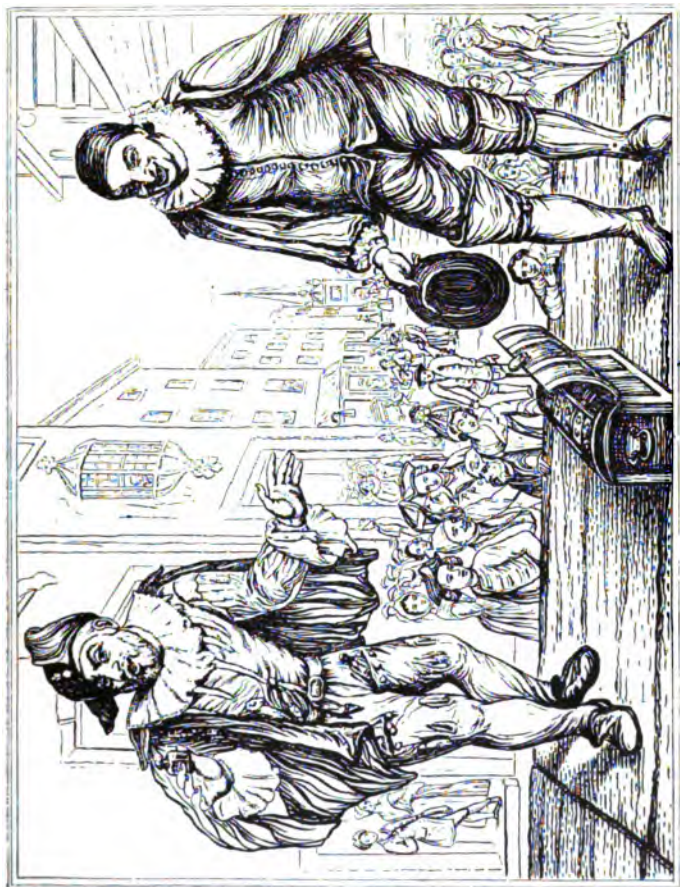
The number of members of this convivial community cannot have been considerable. Hall-Stevenson, in "Crazy Tales," gives eleven stories, each supposed to have been told by one of the band, the identity of the narrator being veiled under a nickname; and, if this may be accepted as a guide, then there were but eleven Demoniacs in 1762—though, in a later edition, there were added, "Old Hewett's Tale," and "Tom of Colesby's Tale." In most cases it has been easy to discover the names of the members. "Anthony" of the "Crazy Tales" was, of course, the host; and "My Cousin" Sterne, though he

was also known among the fraternity as "The Blackbird," probably because of his clerical attire, and under this *sobriquet* was made the subject of one of Hall-Stevenson's "Makarony Fables." "Zachary" was Zachary Moore, of Lofthouse, a fashionable man about town, who spent a great fortune in riotous living; though the only story of his extravagance that has been handed down is that his horses were always shod with silver, and that when a shoe fell off, or was loose, he would have it replaced with a new one. He was a jovial fellow, and popular :

"What sober heads hast thou made ake ?
 How many hast thou kept from nodding ?
 How many wise ones, for thy sake,
 Have flown to thee, and left off plodding ?"

Thus he was apostrophised by Hall-Stevenson, who subsequently indited an epitaph for him, which, while it does much credit to the writer's heart, does less to his head : such a prodigal as Moore was lucky to be presented with an ensigncy.

Z. M. Esq. [thus runs the epitaph], A Living Monument, of the Friendship and Generosity of the Great ; After an Intimacy of Thirty Years With most of the Great Personages of these Kingdoms, Who did him the Honour to assist him, In the laborious Work, Of getting to the far End of a great Fortune ; These his Noble Friends, From Gratitude For the many happy Days and Nights Enjoyed by his means, Exalted



THOMAS BRIDGES AND LAURENCE STERNE.

(See p. 81.)

From an engraving by C. J. Smith.

The figure of Bridges is said to have been drawn by Sterne, and that of Sterne by Bridges.

TO THE
LIBRARY

him, through their Influence, In the forty-seventh year of his Age, To an Ensigncy ; which he actually enjoys at present at Gibraltar.

The "Privy Counsellor" of the "Tales" has been said to be Sir Francis Dashwood, but upon what grounds this statement has been made is not clear : if the assumption is accurate, the "Privy Counsellor" cannot often have attended the gatherings of the brethren, being usually otherwise engaged in London. "Panty," an abbreviation of Pantagruel, is known to have been the Rev. Robert Lascelles, subsequently the incumbent of Gilling, in the West Riding ; and "Don Pringello," whose name has not transpired, has his niche in "Tristram Shandy," where it is mentioned : "I am this moment in a handsome pavilion built by Pringello upon the banks of the Garonne." Don Pringello also receives honourable mention in a *scholium* to the "Tale" inscribed to his name by "Cousin Anthony."

Don Pringello [Hall-Stevenson wrote] was a celebrated Spanish Architect, of unbounded generosity. At his own expence, on the other side of the Pyrenean Mountains, he built many noble castles, both for private people and for the *public*, out of his own funds ; he repaired several palaces, situated upon the pleasant banks of that delightful river, the Garonne, in France, and came over on purpose to rebuild CRAZY-CASTLE ; but, struck with its venerable remains,

he could only be prevailed upon to add a few ornaments, suitable to the stile and taste of the age it was built in.

“Old Hewett” was that eccentric William Hewett, or Hewitt, introduced into “Humphrey Clinker” by Smollett, who prophesied that “his exit will be as odd as his life has been extravagant.” Smollett’s anticipation was justified, even before the novel was published, as the author mentions in a footnote. Hewett in 1767, being then over seventy years of age, was attacked by an internal complaint, and, to quote Smollett—

He resolved to take himself off by abstinence ; and this resolution he executed like an ancient Roman. He saw company to the last, cracked his jokes, conversed freely, and entertained his guests with music. On the third day of his fast he found himself entirely freed from his complaint ; but refused taking sustenance. He said the most disagreeable part of the journey was past, and he should be a cursed fool indeed to put about ship when he was just entering the harbour. In these sentiments he persisted, without any marks of affectation ; and thus finished his course with such ease and serenity, as would have done honour to the firmest Stoic of antiquity.

The other Demoniacs were : “Captain Shadow,” “The Student of Law,” “The Governor of Txlbury,” “The Lxxb,” “The Poet,” and

"Tom of Colesby"; and against these may be placed other frequenters of Skelton Castle—though it is possible some may not have been of the brotherhood. There were Garland, a neighbouring squire; and Scroope, whom Sterne referred to as "Cardinal S." and who was probably a parson; and "G." of the printed letters, whose name in the originals is given as Gilbert. More likely to have been Demoniacs were Hall-Stevenson's younger brother, Colonel George Lawson Hall (who married a daughter of Lord William Manners), and Andrew Irvine, called by his familiars "Paddy Andrews," master of the Grammar School at Kirkleatham. Because Dr. Alexander Carlyle met at Harrogate in the company of Hall-Stevenson that Charles Lee who subsequently became a general in the American army, and fought against his countrymen in the War of Independence, Lee has been written down one of the society; but it is improbable he was enrolled, if only because, leaving England in 1751 at the age of twenty, he was not again in his native land before "Crazy Tales" was written, except for a few months in the spring of 1761.

The Demoniacs (and the title may for the nonce be taken to include all the frequenters of Skelton Castle) have been damned by each succeeding writer who has taken them for his subject; but it is extremely doubtful if they were as black as they have been painted. Had

they been merely vulgar debauchees it is inconceivable that Sterne would have let them make the acquaintance, not only of his wife, but also of the young daughter he cherished so tenderly ; and it is only one degree less unlikely that they would have won and retained his affectionate regard for a score of years, or that he would have read to them "Tristram Shandy" and have desired their opinion of the various instalments of that work. His letters are full of references to the Demoniacs, and he rarely wrote to "dear Cousin Anthony" without sending greetings to his associates, and expressing the wish that he was with them. He wrote from Toulouse, August 12, 1762 :

Greet the Colonel [Hall] in my name, and thank him cordially from me for his many civilities to Madame and Mademoiselle Sterne, who send all due acknowledgments. . . . Oh ! how I envy you all at Crazy Castle !—I could like to spend a month with you—and should return back again for the vintage. . . . Now farewell—remember me to my beloved Colonel—greet Panty most lovingly on my behalf, and if Mrs. C—— and Miss C——, etc., are at G[uisborough], greet them likewise with a holy kiss.—So God bless you.

A couple of months later, Sterne, still at Toulouse, addressed Hall-Stevenson :

If I had nothing to stop me I would engage to set out this morning, and knock at Crazy

Castle gates in three days' less time—by which time I should find you and the Colonel, Panty, etc., all alone—the season I most wish and like to be with you.

Again and again in his letters are allusions to the Crazelites, as Sterne often called them. Even in the last year of his life he looked forward to being present at a reunion at the Castle: "We shall all meet from the east, and from the south, and (as at the last) be happy together."

Faults the Demoniacs certainly had; but there is no reason to believe, indeed there is not a jot or tittle of evidence to support the suggestion, that they performed the blasphemous rites associated with the more famous institutions that served as their model. Their indulgences were limited to coarse stories and deep potations; which, after all, were regarded as venial sins in the eighteenth century. Even so, of course, it must be admitted they were not fit company for clergymen, and it is a matter for regret that Sterne should have been of the party. Doubtless Laurence told his story of "A Cock and a Bull" with the best of them; but he was no drunkard, and tried to induce Hall-Stevenson to give up the habit of heavy drinking:

"If I was you," quoth Yorick, "I would drink more water, Eugenius."—"And, if I was you, Yorick," replied Eugenius, "so would I."*

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. VIII. ch. v.

On the other hand, several of the Demoniacs were men of intelligence. With all his vices, Dashwood had brains of no mean order ; Irvine, the schoolmaster and a Cambridge D.D., had, at least, some reading ; and Lascelles, a keen fisherman, could write verses—not very good verses, it is true—in Latin and English. It is not certain, however, if he was that Robert Lascelles who wrote the “ Letters on Sporting,” in which he treated of angling, shooting, and coursing, although this rare work has been attributed to him. William Hewett, too, was a cultured man ; he had been tutor to the Marquis of Granby, and was a friend of Voltaire. He had a pretty wit. It has been told how, being in the Campidoglio at Rome, Hewett, who owned “ no religion but that of nature,” made up to the bust of Jupiter, and, bowing very low, exclaimed in the Italian language : “ I hope, Sir, if ever you get your head above water again, you will remember that I paid my respects to you in your adversity.” Indeed that carousals at Skelton Castle were confined to the evening is shown by Hall-Stevenson’s account of his guests’ occupations during the day.

“ Some fell to fiddling, some to fluting,
 Some to shooting, some to fishing,
 Some to pishing and disputing,
 Or to computing by wishing.

“ And in the evening when they met
 (To think on’t always does me good),
 There never met a jollier sett,
 Either before, or since the Flood.”

Nor was Hall-Stevenson a mere voluptuary. Even though the critic may have exaggerated who wrote of him : " He could engage in the grave discussions of criticism and literature with superior power ; he was qualified to enliven general society with the smile of Horace, the laughter of Cervantes ; or he could sit in Fontaine's easy chair, and unbosom his humour to his chosen friends " ; yet there is no doubt that he was a good classical scholar, and, for an Englishman, exceptionally well-read in the *belles lettres* of Europe, in a day when such knowledge was rare.

" ANTHONY, Lord of CRAZY Castle,
Neither a fisher, nor a shooter,
No man's, but any woman's vassal,
If he could find a way to suit her."

So he wrote himself down ; and the description is good so far as it goes. But though " my cousin Anthony " thus indicates that, unlike Sterne, he has no liking for field-sports, he does not mention that he found his pleasure at home in the great library, that was so rich in what Bagehot has described as " old folio learning and the amatory reading of other days." There the owner browsed for hours together, and he wrought better than he knew when he introduced his friend Sterne to the apartment and made him free of it, for there it was that Sterne found in many quaint, forgotten volumes much of that strange lore with which the elder Shandy's mind was packed. Dr. Carlyle found Hall-

Stevenson a "highly accomplished and well-bred gentleman," and Sterne's opinion of his old college-friend is clearly shown not only in his letters but in the character of "Eugenius" in "Tristram Shandy." There must have been virtues in the man who stood for Eugenius, else Sterne, who had as keen an eye for the weaknesses of his fellows as any author that ever lived, would not have immortalised him as the wise, kindly counsellor of Yorick. How tenderly Sterne rallied "cousin Anthony" upon his hypochondria!

And so you think this [letter] cursed stupid—but that, my dear H., depends much upon the *quotâ horâ* of your shabby clock, if the pointer of it is in any quarter between ten in the morning or four in the afternoon—I give it up—or if the day is obscured by dark engendering clouds of either wet or dry weather, I am still lost—but who knows but it be five—and the day as fine a day as ever shone upon the earth since the destruction of Sodom—and peradventure your Honour may have got a good hearty dinner to-day, and eat and drink your intellectuals into a placidulish and blandulish amalgama—to bear nonsense, so much for that.

So he wrote from Coxwold in August 1761; and rather more than a year later, when he was at Toulouse, he reverted to the subject.

I rejoice from my heart, down to my reins, that you have snatch'd so many happy and

sunshiny days out of the hands of the blue devils.—If we live to meet and join our forces as heretofore, we will give these gentry a drubbing—and turn them for ever out of their usurped citidel—some legions of them have been put to flight already by your operations this last campaign—and I hope to have a hand in dispersing the remainder the first time my dear cousin sets up his banners again under the square tower.

Once, indeed, Sterne tried to cure his friend. Hall-Stevenson had a great fear of the effect of the east wind upon his health, and he had a weather-cock placed so that he could see it from the window of his room, and he would consult it every morning. When the wind blew from that quarter he would not get up, or being up would retire to bed. During one of Sterne's visits to Skelton Castle, he bribed a lad to climb up one night and tie the vane to the west; and Hall-Stevenson, after the customary inspection of the weather-cock, joined his guests the next day without any ill effect, although as a matter of fact an east wind was blowing. The trick was subsequently explained, though it is doubtful if it cured the *malade imaginaire*.

Hall-Stevenson was as devoted to Sterne as Sterne to him, and he made agreeable reference to their affection :

"In this retreat, whilom so sweet,
Once TRISTRAM and his cousin dwelt,
They talk of CRAZY when they meet,
As if their tender hearts would melt."

When the first two volumes of "Tristram Shandy" were published, Hall-Stevenson indicted a lyric epistle "To my Cousin Shandy, on his coming to Town," that through its indecency brought in its train more annoyance than pleasure to Sterne; and subsequently (in 1768) parodied the style of the book under the title of "A Sentimental Dialogue between two Souls in the Palpable Bodies of an English Lady of Quality and an Irish Gentleman," introduced by a note: "Tristram Shandy presents his compliments to the Gentlemen of Ireland, and begs their acceptance of a Sentimental Offering, as an acknowledgment due to the Country where he was born." A year after Sterne's death Hall-Stevenson, over the signature of "Eugenius," issued a continuation of "A Sentimental Journey," for which he made the following excuse:

The Editor has compiled this Continuation of the "Sentimental Journey," from such motives, and upon such authority, as he flatters himself will form a sufficient apology to his readers for its publication.

The abrupt manner in which the Second Volume concluded, seemed forcibly to claim a sequel; and doubtless if the author's life had been spared, the world would have received it from his own hand, as he had materials already prepared. The intimacy which subsisted between Mr. Sterne and the Editor, gave the latter frequent occasion of hearing him relate the most

remarkable incidents of the latter part of his last journey, which made such an impression on him, that he thinks he has retained them so perfectly as to be able to commit them to paper. In doing this, he has endeavoured to imitate his friend's stile and manner, but how far he has been successful in this respect, he leaves the reader to determine. The work may now, however, be considered as complete; and the remaining curiosity of the readers of Yorick's "Sentimental Journey," will at least be gratified with respect to facts, events, and observations.

The book opens with an apostrophe to his dead friend :

Delightful Humourist : thine were unaccountable faculties. Thy Muse was the Muse of joy and sorrow—of sorrow and joy. Thou didst so exquisitely blend fancy with feeling, mirth with misfortune; thy laughter was so laughable; and thy sighs so sad; that—thou never wast, never wilt be equalled.—Thou hadst the *Key of the Heart*.—Lend it to a Friend.

O Yorick, hear me! *Half* thy work is left unfinished, and *all* thy spirit is fled.—Send part of it back. Drop one remnant of it to a Friend.

The prayer was not granted. The mantle of Yorick did not fall upon Eugenius, who had neither the power of humour or pathos, but only the indelicacy a hundred-fold increased, of the great man. Indeed, the writings of Hall-Stevenson rendered poor service to his friends,

for it was their publication that brought about the forcible condemnation of the *Demoniacs*: the flagrant indecency of "Crazy Tales" being accepted as a clue to the thoughts and actions of the members of the society. Yet of that little production, which appeared in 1762, the author thought very highly:

"As long as *CRAZY* Castle lasts,
 Their *Tales* will never be forgot,
 And *CRAZY* may stand many blasts,
 And better Castles go to pot."

Thus Hall-Stevenson in his Prologue; doubtless reflecting that, since Skelton Castle had endured through seven centuries, it might well brave the breeze for many generations to come. His prophecy was not falsified, for "Crazy Tales" were not forgot until the castle went to pot—which event, however, took place three years after his death, when his grandson substituted for the unique and picturesque structure a house in which it was possible to live in comfort. Nay, the "Tales" outlived the castle, being reprinted in 1796 and again four-and-twenty years later, when they were assigned on the title-page to Sheridan. A glance at the Catalogue of the British Museum Library shows that some singularly ill-advised person thought fit in 1896 to reissue the book for private circulation.

That Sterne should find a word of praise for "Crazy Tales" was but natural.

I honour the man who has given the world an idea of our parental seat—'tis well done—I look at it ten times a day with a *quando te aspiciam* I felicitate you upon what Messrs. the Reviewers allow you—they have too much judgment themselves not to allow you what you are actually possessed of, "talents, wit, and humour."—Well, write on, my dear cousin, and be guided by thy own fancy.*

It is more surprising to find Horace Walpole enlisting himself among Hall-Stevenson's admirers. "They entertained me extremely," he wrote to a friend, returning some verses, "as Mr. Hall's works always do. He has a vast deal of original humour and wit, and nobody admires him more than I do. . . . If all authors had as much parts and good sense as he has, I should not be so sick of them as I am." The critics as a body were not so kind, and incurred the resentment of the author, who lashed them in "Two Lyric Epistles," which to Gray, writing to the Rev. James Brown, "seemed to be absolute madness." The works, which were collected in 1795, were declared by Sir Walter Scott to be witty, but even that tribute has since been denied them. Bagehot has dismissed them as having "licence without humour, and vice without amusement," and Whitwell Elvin, in his masterly essay on Sterne, correctly stigmatised the "Crazy Tales" as infamous.

* Letter to Hall-Stevenson, dated Toulouse, August 12, 1862.

CHAPTER VI

DR. STERNE AND DR. BURTON

Dr. Jaques Sterne—His ambitions—His early career—His political activity—*The York Courant*—Dr. John Burton the prototype of Dr. Slop in "Tristram Shandy"—His professional training—A staunch Tory—His "Treatise on the Non-naturals"—Arrested as a rebel in 1745—Protests his innocence—Discharged—His attack on Dr. Smellie—His "Monastica Eboracense"—Sterne's malicious attack on him—Sterne's hatred of Roman Catholics—Sterne assists his uncle in political matters—Contributes to *The York Journal*—Quarrels with Dr. Sterne—The alleged cause of the breach—and the cause suggested by John Croft—Dr. Sterne's private life—The date of the quarrel.

JACQUES STERNE, LL.D., or Dr. Sterne, as he preferred to be called, was a most ambitious priest, who at an early stage of his career set his heart on a bishopric, if not, indeed, an archbishopric. There were in those days but two paths to the highest clerical offices. A man might lead a life that was as a shining light to his fellows, he might spend his days and nights ministering to the spiritual well-being of his flock, he might, indeed, be the ideal parish priest—and a parish priest he would remain to the end of his days ; even great learning would seldom secure his advancement. He must have influence, or, failing that, be an active politician working on the right side—the right side being, of course, that in power at the time. In the

days when the Hanoverian dynasty was not too securely established on the throne of Britain, militant clergymen of the right political hue were at a premium. Dr. Sterne did not lead a sanctified life, he had but an indifferent amount of learning, and at the outset little or no influence: therefore he became a politician, and for his services to the Whig party, which were not perhaps so valuable as he considered them, he received ample, if not splendid, reward.

Educated at Jesus College, Cambridge, Jaques Sterne graduated B.A. 1714, and four years later proceeded M.A. He took orders in December 1720, and was ordained priest in February 1722, when he was inducted to the living of Rise, in the East Riding. Four years later he received the degree of Doctor of Laws, and in May 1729 was presented to the vicarage of Hornsea-cum-Riston. A month earlier he had been elected to the prebend of Apesthorpe, in York, which in the following year he exchanged for the more lucrative prebend of Ulkelf. His public life began shortly after his appointment in 1734 to the prebend of South Muskham, in Southwell Minster, when he took part in the general election of that year, concerning himself mainly with the representation for the county of Yorkshire. Some idea of his activity may be gathered from one of his letters to Cholmley Turner, of Kirkleatham, who had sat for Yorkshire in the Whig interest since 1727.

S^r,

I have been with Mr. Poultney's Agent again this morning, and he has promised to engage as many of his friends as he can in your Interest ; and shal call upon S^r Francis Boynton to beg he wil streng[then] him. I beseech y^t we may carry on this smoothly ; for if we shew the least jealousy (for which, when matters are explained, I hope there is no occasion) it will have a bad effect. You may believe me, S^r, with the strongest Attachment that is possible for any man to be,

Your most faithful

obedient servant,

J. STERNE.*

Dr. Sterne's reward for his electioneering services followed quickly, and in November 1735 he was appointed Precentor of York Minster and Archdeacon of Cleveland, in the North Riding, which offices had shortly before been conveniently vacated by the death of John Richardson. Not until twenty years later did he receive further preferment, when he was appointed to the second Prebendal Stall of Durham Cathedral.

The early forties of the eighteenth century were troublous times in England, for the shadow of the Pretender was over the land ; and during this period Dr. Sterne, increasingly anxious to ingratiate himself with the Government, was very active. In the election of 1741 he again

* *Notes and Queries*, Series II. Vol. VII. p. 15.



SKELTON CASTLE, YORKSHIRE.

(See p. 97.)

From an old engraving.

rendered yeoman's service to his party ; and in the eventful year of the rising of '45 he assisted to set on foot a new weekly newspaper, *The York Courant, or, The Protestant Courier*, which was advertised by the publisher, John Gilfillan, as "containing the earliest, best, and most authentic accounts of any in the North of England ; and, being entirely calculated for the service of the King and country, he hoped it would meet with encouragement from all who wished well to the present happy establishment in Church and State." Later in the same year Dr. Sterne took a leading part in inaugurating a fund "for the security of His Majesty's Person and Government, and for the Defence of the County of York," which was started at Bishopthorpe Palace on September 28, and to which the Archbishop subscribed £200, Dr. Sterne £50, and Laurence Sterne £10. During the rebellion Dr. Sterne, as a magistrate, kept a wary eye on Roman Catholics and other likely adherents of the Pretender, and thereby came into conflict with Dr. John Burton, of whom, as the prototype of Dr. Slop in "*Tristram Shandy*," some account must be given.

Dr. Burton, who was born in 1710, studied medicine first at Cambridge, and then at Leyden, where he was the pupil of Hermann Boerhaave ; subsequently he took the degree of M.D. at Rheims. Returning to England, he settled at Heath, where, to use his own words, he "fol-

lowed the profession of physician and man-midwife." A student of obstetrics, a branch of surgery then in its infancy, and diligent in antiquarian research, he yet contrived to find time to devote to politics, and in the Yorkshire election of 1784, the canvassing of the town of Wakefield (from which Heath was not far distant) in the interests of Sir Miles Stapylton, one of the Tory candidates, was left entirely in his hands. Probably it was when, on the fourth day of the polling, he conducted a body of "true blue" freeholders to York, that Dr. Sterne first began to regard him as a dangerous opponent. After his marriage in the following year, Burton removed to York, where he soon became known as a very skilful practitioner, and acquired a great practice in midwifery cases. Possessing knowledge far beyond the limits of the other doctors at York, a provincial reputation interested him only in so far as it secured his bread and butter, and in 1786 he made a bid for a wider fame by publishing, "An Account of a Monstrous Child." The book was widely read, and brought its author a considerable reputation, which was vastly increased two years later when he issued his "Treatise on the Non-Naturals, in which the great influence they have on human bodies is set forth and mechanically accounted for," the dedication of which was accepted by no less a person than Boerhaave. Subsequently, as we know, Sterne poked fun at the title of the

later work : " Why the most natural actions of a man's life should be called his Non-naturals—is another question," he remarked in " Tristram Shandy." *

In the election of 1741 Burton took part in the hard-fought struggle for the parliamentary representation of the City of York, championing Sir John Lister Kaye and Godfrey Wentworth against Edward Thompson, of Marston, and Sir William Milner, on whose behalf Dr. Sterne was working. In the end honours were easy, for Godfrey Wentworth and Edward Thompson were returned ; but Dr. Sterne, who could not brook opposition, from this time forth cherished a grudge against Burton, and presently found an opportunity of giving vent to his spleen.

Burton's political enthusiasms led him into trouble. In November 1745 one Birkbeck, of Settle, sent word to York that Burton had been seen with the Highlanders at Hornby, and a rumour ran through the cathedral town that the Doctor had joined the rebel army. The quidnuncs were somewhat nonplussed when, a few days later, he returned to York; but a spirit of uneasiness was abroad, and on November 30 he was arrested as " a suspicious person to His Majesty's Government," and committed as such to the Castle by the magistrates, Thomas Place, the Recorder of York, and Dr. Sterne. Dr. Sterne soon showed his bias against Burton by

* Vol. I. ch. xxiii.

announcing that the doctor had been committed for high treason—an offence with which he was not even charged; and this he stated, not only in communications to his friends, but also in a paragraph he sent, or caused to be sent, to a London newspaper, *Lloyd's Evening Post*—it has been suggested that the paragraph was written by Laurence Sterne under his uncle's direction.

Burton vigorously protested his innocence. According to his account, subsequently published as "British Liberty Endanger'd," the rebels on November 22 were at Kendal, and no one knew whether their route would be through Yorkshire or through the town of Lancaster. He had some property not far from Settle in the West Riding, the Michaelmas rents of which had not been paid, and he thought it advisable without delay to collect them, being apprehensive that otherwise, by the near approach of the rebel army to his land, he would be in danger of losing the money. He declared that before he set out he consulted the Recorder, who advised him to go, and that only when he was at Settle on Saturday did he first hear that the Pretender had taken the route towards Lancaster. He wrote to York to say that he would be back on the following Tuesday or Wednesday, so his story ran; but on Sunday he repaired to the village of Hornby, which, he said, was the nearest town where he could get tolerable accommodation; and while he was being shaved

at the inn he was taken prisoner by a party of Highlanders, which had repaired there for refreshment after having escorted Lord Elcho and other officers to dine at Hornby Castle. From Hornby he was taken to Lancaster, released on *parole*, and on Tuesday given a pass for his safety through the lines of Lord George Murray, Lieutenant-General of the rebel army, when he went to Settle, met his tenants, and returned to York. His accusers, on the other hand, declared that he went to Hornby for the specific purpose of being arrested, having previously intimated to the rebel leaders that he would be there, and that he desired an interview with Lord George Murray and the Pretender. While his enemies' statements were based on conjecture, Burton's story is so circumstantial that, coupled with the fact that it has never been contradicted with any show of reason, it must be accepted as accurate. This view was ultimately taken by the authorities. He was eventually, in March 1747, released on bail, and committed to the July Assizes at York; but when he surrendered no prosecution was instituted, and he was discharged.

Burton at once resumed practice at York; and in 1751 greatly increased his reputation as an accoucheur by publishing "An Essay towards a Complete New System of Midwifery," which was followed two years later by his "Letter to William Smellie, M.D.," a critical

exposition of the latter's recently issued "Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Midwifery." While allowance must be made for the heat engendered by controversy—for Smellie was not without honour in his day—the opening passage of Burton's letter is too good to be allowed to sink into oblivion :

To confound all nature—all distinction of sex—to make animals vegetables, and one and the same author two different persons, and neither character agree with the true one—to palm upon us an author that never existed—to pass over in silence several material things that contradict your own practise in those authors that are genuine, and make them say things they never dreamt of, in order to countenance it, is such a piece of history as the present age cannot boast of ; yet, strange as this may seem to be, you have done it.

Assuming knowledge he had not, Smellie had mistaken the head-piece of a print in a collection of obstetrical works, for the name of an author, and he gravely quoted *Lithopædus Senonensis*. Burton was not slow to seize this opportunity for attack :

The seventeenth author, collected, as you tell us, by *Spachius*, is *Lithopædus Senonensis*, which instead of being an author, is only the drawing of a petrified child, when taken from its mother, after she was opened ; and this is evident from

the title, *Lithopæ di Senonensis Icon*, which, with the explanation, is contained in a single page only.

Smellie's book and his ignorant blunder would long since have been forgotten but for the fact that Sterne enshrined Smellie in "Tristram Shandy" as Adrianus Smelogot, and, allowing the elder Shandy to accept Smellie's statement, drew attention to the mistake by correcting it in a footnote. *

Burton's surgical treatises are now, of course, as out of date as those of his opponent; but he has still an honourable place in men's minds as a pioneer in the branch of science to which he devoted himself and as the author of that valuable contribution to county history, "Monasticon Eboracense." It is, however, as the prototype of Dr. Slop that he is most generally known, and it is hard on him that this should be so, for the portrait is in every particular grossly unfair. He may have been a bad horseman, but there is no reason to suppose that his appearance was so peculiar as Sterne describes it: "A little, squat, uncourtly figure . . . of about four feet and a half perpendicular height, with a breadth of back, and a sesquipedality of belly, which might have done honour to a sergeant in the horse-guards." † Sterne would indeed have been better advised not to sneer at the doctor, for

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. II. ch. xix. † *Ibid.*, Vol. II. ch. ix.

whenever he does so he shows his ignorance. The gibe at Burton's book on the Non-naturals, already given, was puerile ; and not less absurd was his feeble gibe at the " five shillings book upon the subject of midwifery " and the *tire-tête*, the newly invented forceps, and other instruments, which, horrible to the layman, were of great value to the surgeon. Sterne's bias, like his uncle's, is unmistakable. His spite, however, was not aroused by the doctor's new ideas in the science of obstetrics, nor by his political views, but by the rumour that Burton was, or had become, a Roman Catholic—and even for this there was no better foundation than the fact that he was a Jacobite. Sterne, however, was not in advance of his time as regards the Roman Catholics, and he attacked them with all the vigour of the bigot.

Such a one the Levite wanted to share his solitude, and fill up that uncomfortable blank in the heart in such a situation ; for notwithstanding all we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handsome things said upon the sweets of retirement, etc.—yet still " it is not good for man to be alone " : nor can all which the cold-hearted pedant stuns our ears with upon the subject, ever give one answer of satisfaction to the mind ! in the midst of the loudest vauntings of philosophy, Nature will have her yearnings for society and friendship ;—a good heart wants some objects to be kind to ;—and the best parts

of our blood, and the purest of our spirits suffer most under the destitution. Let the torpid monk seek heaven comfortless and alone.—God speed him ! For my own part, I fear I should never so find the way : let me be wise and religious—but let me be man. Wherever Thy Providence places me, or whatever be the road I take to get to Thee—give me some companion in my journey, be it only to remark to, How our shadows lengthen as the sun goes down !—to whom I may say, How fresh is the face of Nature ! How sweet the flowers of the field ! How delicious are these fruits ! *

Sterne had already attacked another aspect of the Roman Catholic religion in the sermon, “ The Abuses of Conscience consider’d ” that he had preached at the summer Assizes of 1750.

Consider, at this instant, how the votaries of that religion are every day thinking to do service and honour to God, by actions which are a dishonour and scandal to themselves.

To be convinced of this, go with me for a moment into the prisons of the Inquisition.—Behold *religion*, with mercy and justice chain’d down under her feet,—there sitting ghastly upon a black tribunal, propp’d up with racks and instruments of torture—Hark !—What a piteous moan !—See the melancholy wretch who utter’d it, just brought forth to undergo the anguish of a mock-trial, and endure the utmost pains that a studied system of *religious cruelty* has been

* “ The Levite and his Concubine.”

able to invent. Behold this helpless victim delivered up to his tormentors. His body so wasted with sorrow and long confinement, you'll see every nerve and muscle as it suffers.—Observe the last movement of that horrid engine.—What convulsions it has thrown him into! Consider the nature of the posture in which he now lies stretch'd.—What exquisite torture he endures by it.—'Tis all nature can bear.—Good God! see how it keeps his weary soul hanging upon his trembling lips, willing to take its leave,—but not suffered to depart! Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell,—dragg'd out of it again to meet the flames,—and the insults in his last agonies, which this principle—this principle that there can be no religion without morality—has prepared for him!

To return to Dr. Sterne. There is no doubt that he found his nephew Laurence of much assistance to him, for so pushing a man must have had many enemies; especially his campaign against Roman Catholics in general and the York Nunnery in particular must have occupied much of his time. In these matters Laurence gladly assisted, and had his uncle confined his demands on the younger man's services to such affairs, they might have continued on amicable terms—friends in the true sense they probably never were, for Sterne could never forget his uncle's heartlessness immediately after the ensign's death, and, though he condoned this in the face of subsequent patron-

age, there cannot be a doubt that, at the bottom of his mind, it still rankled.

Dr. Sterne, however, insisted that Laurence must become a politician; but to politics the younger man had no leanings. It has been said that, at his uncle's request, he occasionally contributed to *The York Journal* during its brief life, and it has been suggested that he made the attack in *Lloyd's Evening Post* on Dr. Burton; but, while this may have been so (and it is accepted as a fact by most writers), it is but fair to state that there is no evidence to support the assumption. Indeed, there is Sterne's word for it that his uncle quarrelled with him, not, be it observed, because he would not continue to write, but because he would not write paragraphs in the newspaper.

He quarrelled with me [Sterne wrote years later in his autobiographical sketch] because I would not write paragraphs in the newspapers—tho' he was a party-man, I was not, and detested such dirty work: thinking it beneath me—from that period, he became my bitterest enemy.

Another reason for the breach between uncle and nephew has been put forward by John Croft, who stated that it was occasioned by a cause very different from that assigned by Sterne. They fell out, he said, over a favourite mistress of the archdeacon, who had a child by the

younger clergyman ; and he added that " the cause of the breach," meaning the child, was alive when he was writing in 1795, and resembled Sterne very much.* This, however, was but the echo of the gossip of the coffee-house of fifty years earlier, and the only countenance it receives is from the fact that it is known the archdeacon was a loose liver. A story has been handed down, which illustrates the peculiar morals of that dignitary of the Church. Dr. Sterne once noticed that the Rev. Richard Warneford, Vicar of St. Martin's, Coney Street, and Subchanter of the Minster, had been absent from the daily service three times in one week. " What explanation have you to give of this neglect ? " Dr. Sterne asked severely, upon the next appearance of Warneford. " Mr. Precentor," replied the vicar, " I went to Acomb, where my wife was very ill—my *own* wife, Mr. Precentor." † In the absence of any evidence, the charge must be dismissed in favour of the account given by Sterne.

To the biographer, however, the cause of the quarrel is less material than the date of its occurrence ; but this question, unfortunately, cannot be satisfactorily answered. Mr. Fitzgerald does not hazard any suggestion, but Dr. Sidney Lee thinks " Sterne's alienation from his uncle began after 1745 "; and Professor Cross

* *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 225.

† *Davies, York Press*, p. 255.

remarks that, "in 1747, or thereabouts, occurred a hot scene between the two divines." It would be interesting to know upon what authority Professor Cross has based his statement, which is in direct opposition to Sterne's own reference to the breach in a letter to Dr. Sterne, dated April 5, 1751 :

For notwithstanding the hardest measure that ever man received continued on your side without any provocation on mine, without ever once being told my fault, or conscious of ever committing one which deserved an unkind look from you,—notwithstanding this, and the bitterness of ten years' unwearied persecution, I retain that sense of the service you did me at my first setting out in the world, which becomes a man inclined to be grateful.*

From this passage it is clear that there was no "hot scene," for had there been it is inconceivable that Dr. Sterne would have left his nephew in doubt as to the cause of his anger. Incidentally, the passage disposes of Croft's allegation of Sterne's connection with the arch-deacon's favourite mistress, for, had this been the cause of the trouble, it is almost certain that there would have been a violent interview between the men, and absolutely certain that Sterne would not have dared to write that he was not "conscious of ever committing a fault which deserved an unkind look" from his re-

* British Museum, Add. MSS.

lative. One other point in the extract quoted calls for comment, and it is a point of considerable importance, though, strangely enough, attention has not been drawn to it by any previous writer on the subject. What does Sterne mean by referring to "the bitterness of ten years' unwearied persecution"? At a first glance, seeing that the letter was written in 1751, it would indicate that the rupture occurred in 1741, a date much earlier than any hitherto suggested. An examination of the facts, however, does not bear out this simple explanation, for, if the breach occurred in 1741, it is necessary entirely to abandon the belief that, after his marriage, Sterne acted as an assistant to his uncle, which clearly was the case:

Now for your desire of knowing the reason of my turning author. Why, truly I am tired of employing my brains for other people's advantage.—'Tis a foolish sacrifice I have made for some years to an ungrateful person.*

Sterne's services were doubtless employed by his uncle in the election of 1741, in the matter of Dr. Burton, and in the cathedral quarrels in which the archdeacon always took an active part. The best explanation of the "ten years' unwearied persecution" is that Dr. Sterne asked more than Sterne was inclined to give, and that, finding his nephew less subservient

* Letter to Mrs. Ferguson, York, November 19, 1759.

than he expected, the archdeacon refrained from allowing any preferment that he could divert to come to the younger man; that the relations became more and more strained as time went on, and that, after Laurence's refusal to take any further part in political warfare, the couple, each with a grievance, drew apart with anger in their hearts. Of this theory there is confirmation to be found in "Tristram Shandy."

The whole plan of the attack, just as Eugenius had foreboded, was put into execution all at once,—with so little mercy on the side of the allies—and so little suspicion in Yorick, of what was carrying on against him,—that when he thought, good easy man! full surely preferment was o'ripening,—they had smote his root, and then he fell, as many a worthy man had fallen before him.

Yorick, however, fought it out with all imaginable gallantry for some time; till overpowered by numbers, and worn out at length by the calamities of the war,—but more so, by the ungenerous manner in which it was carried on,—he threw down the sword; and though he kept up his spirits in appearance to the last, he died, nevertheless, as was generally thought, quite broken-hearted.*

From this it will be seen that the final rupture was a surprise to Laurence. It must also have been a blow to him, for doubtless he expected

* Vol. I. ch. xii.

to be his uncle's heir. According to John Croft, Laurence, notwithstanding the quarrel, had some hope of receiving a legacy, for when the archdeacon died in the summer of 1759, Laurence had mourning ready, but when he learnt that not a penny was left to him, he was so "offended," says the chronicler—though the word should be "disgusted"—that he would not do it.* This story is the merest fancy, for, after the particulars of the breach given in the following chapter, it is inconceivable that Laurence could have dreamt of benefiting under his uncle's will.

* *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 226.



MRS. MONTAGU.

(See p. 184.)

From an engraving by R. Cooper after a portrait by Zinck.

TO MY
WIFE

CHAPTER VII

STERNE AND HIS MOTHER

(1758)

Dr. Sterne finds an opportunity to avenge himself on his nephew—Mrs. Roger Sterne and her daughters, Mary and Catherine—She demands money from her son—Comes to England to enforce her request—Sends Catherine to enlist Dr. Sterne's assistance—Sterne's offers regarded as insufficient—Mrs. Roger Sterne's untruthfulness—Sterne a poor man—The persecution continues—Sterne threatens to make a public defence—Mrs. Roger Sterne's character—Dr. Sterne's application for a prebend of Westminster—His attempt to injure Sterne—Sterne's letter to the Archdeacon of Cleveland.

THE only difference, at first, that the breaking off of friendly relations with the archdeacon made in the life of Laurence Sterne was that henceforth he visited York less frequently, and resided more regularly at the Sutton vicarage. Dr. Sterne at this time was content to ignore his late protégé, and did not go out of his way to injure him : it would not be fair to say that he was awaiting a chance to avenge himself, but certainly when the opportunity came he seized it eagerly and availed himself of it to the full. In Sterne's writings his uncle does not appear, but it was undoubtedly his conduct that inspired Eugenius with this reflection :

Revenge from some baneful corner shall level

a tale of dishonour at thee, which no innocence of heart or integrity of conduct shall set right.—The fortunes of thy house shall totter,—thy character, which led the way to them, shall bleed on every side of it,—thy faith questioned,—thy works belied,—thy wit forgotten,—thy learning trampled on. To wind up the last scene of thy tragedy, CRUELTY and COWARDICE, twin ruffians, hired and set on by MALICE in the dark, shall strike together at all thy infirmities and mistakes ;—The best of us, my dear lad, lie open there,—and trust me,—trust me, Yorick, when, to gratify a private appetite, it is once resolved upon, that an innocent and an helpless creature shall be sacrificed, 'tis an easy matter to pick up sticks enough from any thicket where it has strayed, to make a fire to offer it up with.*

Probably Dr. Sterne would have dropped out of the narrative of his nephew's life but for the opening given him by the unfortunate quarrel between Laurence and his mother. Hitherto nothing has been said of the character of Ensign Sterne's wife, because it has been thought desirable to let her reveal herself in the discreditable and sordid squabble which she forced on her son.

It has been stated that when Mrs. Sterne became a widow she opened an embroidery shop in Ireland, and for eleven years her son rarely heard from her. At first her two surviving daughters, Mary and Catherine, lived with her, but soon the elder married.

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. I. ch. xii.

This child was most unfortunate [Sterne wrote in his memoir]. She married one Weemans in Dublin—who used her most unmercifully—spent his substance, became a bankrupt, and left my poor sister to shift for herself,—which she was able to do but for a few months, for she went to a friend's house in the country, and died of a broken heart. She was a most beautiful woman—of a fine figure, and deserved a better fate.

Probably Laurence would to the end of his days have been little troubled by his mother, but for the fact that she was informed he had married a rich woman, whereupon it occurred to her that she and her daughter Catherine ought to share in his new prosperity.

From my father's death to the time I settled in the world, which was eleven years, my mother lived in Ireland, and as during all that time I was not in a condition to furnish her with money I seldom heard from her, and when I did the account I generally had was that, by the help of an Embroidery school that she kept, and of the punctual payment of her pension which was £20 a year, she lived well, and would have done so to this hour had not the news that I had married a woman of fortune hastened her over to England.*

From a passage in the same letter it appears that Mrs. Sterne came to England in 1748.

* Letter to Dr. Sterne, April 5, 1751.

The very hour I received notice of her landing at Liverpool I took post to prevent her coming nearer me, stayed three days with her, used all the arguments I could fairly to engage her to return to Ireland, and end her days with her own relations. I convinced her that besides the interest of my wife's fortune, I had then but a bare hundred pounds a year, out of which my ill health obliged me to keep a curate, that we had moreover ourselves to keep, and in that sort of decency which left it not in our power to give her much; that which we could spare she should as certainly receive in Ireland as here; that the place she had left was a cheap country—her native one, and where she was sensible £20 a year was more than equal to £30 here, besides the discount of having her pension paid in England where it was not due, and the utter impossibility I was under in making up so many deficiencies.

I concluded with representing to her the inhumanity of a Mother *able* to maintain herself, thus forcing herself as a burden upon a Son who was scarce able to support himself without breaking in upon the future support of another person whom she might imagine was much dearer to me.

In short, I summed up all those arguments with making her a present of 20 guineas, which with a present of cloathes etc., which I had given her the day before, I doubted not would have the effect I wanted. But I was much mistaken, for though she heard me with attention, yet as soon as she had got the money into

her pocket, she told me with an air of the utmost insolence, That as for going back to live in Ireland she was determined to show me no such sport, that she had found I had married a wife who had brought me a fortune, and she was resolved to enjoy her share of it, and live the rest of her days at her ease at York or Chester.*

Sterne could not move her from her fixed resolve to live henceforth in England, and the interview concluded with Sterne assuring her, "Though my income was strait I should not forget I was a son, and though she had forgot she was a *mother*."

From Liverpool [so continues Sterne's account] as she had determined she went with my sister to fix at Chester, where though she had little just grounds for such an expectation she found me better than my word, for we were kind to her above our power and common justice to ourselves, and though it went hard enough down with us to reflect we were supporting both her and my sister in the pleasures and advantages of a town life which for prudent reasons we denied ourselves, yet still we were weak enough to do it for 5 years together, though I was not without continual remonstrances on my side as well as perpetual clamours on theirs, which you will naturally imagine to have been the case when all that was given was thought as much above reason by the one, as it fell *below* the Expectations of the other.

* Letter to Dr. Sterne, April 5, 1751.

Nothing that Sterne could do would satisfy his mother and sister, who would not accept his assurances that he was really a poor man and had difficulty to make ends meet. Dissatisfied with what money he had sent her, his mother sent her daughter to York that she might make complaint of her son's treatment to Dr. Sterne, and engage him, as Laurence subsequently expressed it, "to second them in their unreasonable claims" upon him and his wife.

This was the intent of her [Catherine] coming [he wrote], though the pretence of her journey (of which I bore the expences) was to *make* a month's visit to me, or rather a month's experiment of my further weakness.—She stayed her time or longer—was received by us with all kindness, was sent back at my own charge with my own servant and horses, with 5 guineas which I gave her to put in her pocket and a six and thirty piece which my wife put into her hand as she took horse. . . . To return to my sister.

As we were not able to give her a fortune, and were as little able to maintain her as she expected—therefore as the truest mark of our friendship in such a situation, my wife and self took no small pains, the time she was with us to turn her thoughts to some way of depending upon her own industry, in which we offered her all imaginable assistance, 1st by proposing to her that if she would set herself to learn the business of a Mantua maker, as soon as she could

get insight enough into it to make a gown and set up for herself, That we would give her £80 to begin the world and support her till business fell in, or [2nd], if she would go into a Milliner's shop in London my wife engaged not only to get her into a shop where she should have £10 a year wages but to equip her with cloathes, etc. properly for the place; or lastly, if she liked it better, as my Wife had then an opportunity of recommending her to the family of one of the first of our Nobility—she undertook to get her a creditable place in it, where she would receive no less than £8 or £10 a year wages, with other advantages. My sister showed no seeming opposition to either of the two last proposals till my wife had wrote and got a favourable answer to the one, and an immediate offer of the other. It will astonish you, Sir, when I tell you she rejected them with the utmost scorn, telling me I might send my own children to service when I had any, but for her part as she was the daughter of a gentleman, *she would not disgrace* herself but live as such. Notwithstanding so absurd an instance of her folly, which might have disengaged me from any further concern, yet I persisted in doing what I thought was right, and though after this the tokens of our kindness were neither so great nor so frequent as before, yet nevertheless we continued sending what we could conveniently spare.*

On Catherine's return through York she went to Dr. Sterne, concealing what her brother was

* Letter to Dr. Sterne, April 5, 1751.

doing for her and her mother, and representing that they had left Ireland upon his express invitation—a statement Laurence branded as a deliberate untruth.

'Tis an absolute falsehood [he said] and even so far from probability—that the character which you and Mrs. Custobadie had given me and my wife of my mother's clamorous and rapacious temper, made us live in a perpetual terror of her thrusting herself upon us.

The archdeacon, being still on good terms with Laurence, did not take much notice of the girl's charges, being evidently aware of her character and her mother's; but after the quarrel he lent a ready ear to everything said to the detriment of his nephew. As Sterne reminded him, when the ensign's widow desired to see the archdeacon after her husband's death, he refused to give her an interview.

When she came this second time from Ireland to Chester and from thence to York to raise this clamour against me [he pointed out very clearly], she found no difficulties of this kind—was openly received by you; which I have put you in mind of to observe to you, from what the different reception she met with from you in these two instances seems evidently to have sprung. In this last application she came recommended to your compassion with a complaint against *me*. In the former she had nothing to move you but the real distress of her condition.

This was a thrust the archdeacon could not parry, and it must bring home to all readers that when he consented to receive his sister-in-law and his niece he was actuated by no interest in the woman but solely by a desire to have at Laurence with the weapon placed unexpectedly in his hand.

It is not usual [Sterne said in his defence] to take receipts for presents made ; so that I have not many vouchers of that kind, and [as] my Mother has more than once denied the money I have sent her, even to my own face, I have little expectation of such acknowledgements as she ought to make. But this I solemnly declare, upon the nearest computation we can make, that in money, cloaths and other presents we are £90 poorer for what we have given and remitted to them. In one of the remittances (which was the summer [of] my sister's visit) and which as I remember was a small bill drawn for £8 by Mr. Ricord upon Mr. Boldero, after my Mother had got the money in Chester for the bill she peremptorily denied the receipt of it. I naturally supposed some mistake of Mr. Ricord in directing. However that she might not be a sufferer by the disappointment I immediately sent another bill for as much more ; but withal said as Mr. Ricord could prove his sending her the bill I was determined to trace out *who* had got my money, upon which she wrote word back that she had received it herself but had *forgot it*. You will the more readily believe this when I inform you that in Dec. '47

when my Mother went to your house to complain she could not get a *farthing* from me, that she carried with her Ten guineas in her pocket which I had given her but two days before. If she could *forget* such a sum, I had reason to *remember* it, for when I gave it I did not leave myself one guinea in the house to befriend my wife, though then within one day of her labour and under an apparent necessity of a man-midwife to attend her.

What *uses* she made of this ungenerous concealment I refer again to yourself. But I suppose they were the same as in my sister's case, to make a penny of us both.

When I gave her this sum I desired she would go and acquaint you with it, and moreover took that occasion to tell her I would give her £8 every year whilst I lived. The week after she wrote me word she had been with you and was determined not to accept that offer unless I would settle the £8 upon her, out of my wife's fortune, and chargeable upon it in case my wife should be left a widow. This she added was your particular advice which without better evidence I am not yet willing to believe; because though you do not yet know the particulars of my Wife's fortune you must know so much of it, was such an event as my death to happen shortly, without such a burden as this upon my widow and my child, *that Mrs. Sterne would be as much distressed and as undeservedly so as any widow in Gt. Britain*; and though I know as well as you and my mother that I have a *power in law* to lay her open to all the

terrors of such a melancholy situation—that I feel I have *no power in equity or in conscience* to do so ; and I will add in her behalf considering how much she has merited at my hands as the best of wives, that was I capable of being worried into so cruel measure as to give away hers, and her child's bread upon the clamour which you and my Mother have raised—that I should not only be the weakest but the *worst man* that ever woman trusted with all she had.

I do remember, too, when I married I acquainted you that Mrs. Sterne refused to have her own fortune settled upon her, and wished for no better security than my honour ; to which you *then* answered, "*I was the more bound to take care, that the Lady should be no sufferer by such a mark of her confidence.*" She never shall through my fault, though she has through my misfortune and that long train of difficulties and drawbacks with which you know I began the world.

Laurence then mentioned how he had to repay the money advanced for his schooling and other expenses incurred on his behalf during the nine years he was at Heath, and to settle the debts he had perforce contracted at Cambridge ; how he had to undertake the furnishing and the "great repairs of a large ruinous house," that is, of the parsonage house at Sutton.

To all which [he continued] let me add the continual drain from my Mother. All these together, though I hold myself not accountable

to any person but One who will ever be the first to do me justice—all these together have so broke in upon that fortune which *you* recommended to my care that I will trust you a secret concerning it which is this, that was I like to die this night, I have not more than the very Income of £20 a year (which my Mother enjoys) to divide equally betwixt my wife, and helpless child, and perhaps a third unhappy sharer that might come into the world some months after its father's death to claim its part.

The false modesty of not being able to declare this, has made me thus long to pay my mother and [submit] to this clamour raised against me, and since I have made known thus much of my condition as an honest man, it becomes me to add, *that I think I have no right* to apply one shilling of my Income to any other purpose but that of laying by a provision for my wife and child : and that it will be time enough (if then) to add somewhat to my Mother's pension of £20 a year when I have as much to leave my Wife, who besides the duties I owe her of a Husband and the father of a dear child, has this further claim ;—that she, whose bread I am thus defending, was the person who brought it into the family, and whose birth and education would ill enable her to struggle in the world without it—that the other person who now claims it from her, and has raised us so much sorrow upon that score, brought not one sixpence into the family—and though it would give me pain enough to report it upon any other occasion, that she was the daughter of no other

than a poor Suttler who followed the Camp in Flanders—was neither born nor bred to the expectation of a 4th part of what the Government allows her, and therefore has reason to be contented with such a provision, though double the sum would be nakedness to my wife.

Early in 1748 the persecution, now encouraged by Dr. Sterne, became so persistent, and therefore so distressing, that Sterne at last revolted, and determined to make an effort to put himself right with the world in regard to his relations with his mother. As a first step he proposed that his wife should wait upon the archdeacon, "To lay the state of our circumstances fairly before you, and with that the account of what we have done for my Mother, that from a view of both together you might be *convinced* how much my Mother has complained without reason."

My motive for offering to send my wife rather than myself, upon this particular business, being firstly merely to avoid the occasion of any heat which might arise betwixt you and me upon anything foreign to the Errand, which might possibly disappoint the end of it—and secondly as I had reason to think your passions were pre-engaged in this affair, and that the respect you owed my wife as a gentlewoman would be a check against their breaking out; and consequently that you would be more likely to give her a cordial hearing, which was all I wished, and indeed all that a plain story to be told without Art or Management could possibly stand in

want of. As you had thought proper to concern yourself in my Mother's complaints against me, I took it for granted you *could* not deny me so plain a piece of Justice, so that when you wrote me word back by my servant—"You desired to be excused from any conference with my wife, but that I might appear before you," as I foresaw such an Interview with the sense I had of such a treatment was likely to produce nothing but an angry expostulation (which could do no good, but might do hurt), I begged *in my turn* to be excused, and as you had already refused so unexceptionable an offer of hearing my defence, I supposed in course, you would be silent for ever after upon that Head, and therefore I concluded with saying as I was under no necessity of applying to you and wanted no man's direction or Advice in my own private concerns I would make myself as easy as I could with the consciousness of having done my Duty and of being able to prove I had whenever I thought fit and for the future that I was determined never to give you any further trouble upon the Subject.

In this resolution I have kept for three years and should have continued so to the end of my life, but being told again by some of my friends that this clamour has been kept up against me, and by as singular a Stroke of Ill Design as could be levelled against a defenceless man, who lives retired in the country and has few opportunities of disabusing the world; that my Mother has moreover been fixed in that very place where a hard report might do me (as a

Clergyman) the most real disservice,—I was roused by the advice of my friends to think of some way of defending myself which I own I should have set about immediately by telling my story publickly to the world, but for the following inconvenience, that I could not do myself justice this way without doing myself an injury at the same time by laying open the nakedness of my circumstances, which for aught I knew was likely to make me suffer more in the opinion of one half of the world than I could possibly gain from the other part of it by the clearest defence that could be made.

A man is not lightly driven to the thought of taking the world into his confidence in such private family matters, and Sterne did not begin to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of such a course until he had been subjected to many years' undeserved suffering. Before doing anything, however, he consulted his "old friend and college acquaintance," Dr. Fountayne, the Dean of York, who advised him that there was nothing better than for Sterne to meet his mother and uncle face to face. "With his usual friendship and humanity," the Dean undertook to try to arrange such a meeting, and in February 1751 he saw Dr. Sterne on this business, who promised to see his nephew shortly. This promise, however, he subsequently declined to honour.

The denying me this piece of common right [Sterne wrote on April 5, 1751] is the hardest

measure that a man in my situation could receive, and though the whole inconvenience of it may be thought to fall as intended, directly upon me, yet I wish, Dr. Sterne, a great part of it may not rebound upon yourself. For why, may any one ask, why will you interest yourself in a complaint against your Nephew if you are determined against hearing what he has to say for himself?—and if you thus deny him every opportunity he seeks of doing himself justice? Is it not too plain you do not wish to find him justified, or that you do not care to lose the uses of such a handle against him? However it may seem to others, the case appearing in this light to me it has determined me—contrary to my former promise “of giving you no further trouble”—to add this, which is not to solicit again what you have denied me to the Dean (for after what I have felt from so hard a treatment, I would not accept of it, should the offer now come from yourself).

It was in this letter that Sterne set down a “plain and honest narrative of my Behaviour and my mother’s, too,” and his determination to disown his uncle for the future. It is fortunate for Sterne’s reputation that he wrote this lengthy letter (from which extracts have been given in this chapter), since, before it was discovered, his conduct as a son had been universally regarded as heartless. When, about 1758, his mother was thrown into York jail for debts incurred by her some time before at



"TRISTRAM SHANDY."

(See p. 206.)

An illustration by M. A. Rooker, from an early edition.

Chester, where she had set up a school, much indignation was aroused because Sterne did not satisfy her creditors, and she was relieved only by a subscription raised among the parents of her pupils. John Croft mentions that "it was held unpardonable in him not to relieve her, when he had the meanings of doing it. . . . Never anyone dwelt more upon Humanity in theory, but it does not appear he put so much of it in practice"; and Byron wrote that, "Sterne preferred whining over a dead ass to relieving the necessities of a living mother." The clever epigram remains in the memory of all who read it; but there was no truth in it. The convincing defence of his conduct which Sterne made in 1751 applies equally to the situation seven years later. In spite of all he had suffered, he, at the time of his mother's imprisonment, did not neglect her, and, writing to John Blake, mentions that he is going to see her at York, and adds, "I trust my poor mother's affair is by this time ended, to *our* comfort, and, I trust, to hers." A man so little grasping of money, indeed often too careless of it, and so generous to his wife, would scarcely be likely, if he had the means, to begrudge the necessary expenditure to release his mother from prison.

That Sterne had no affection for his mother is a fact patent to all who have read this chapter and the extracts from his letter contained in it ;

and; since this was not due to want of natural feeling—for that he possessed this is clear from the love he cherished for his father and his daughter—it seems more than likely the fault was with this parent. That as he grew up he may have resented his father's *mésalliance* is most likely, but this feeling would not have existed had Mrs. Sterne been a good mother. That she could not support him in his youth was nothing; but that she, who never showed him any kindness during the years he stood sorely in need of sympathy, should have descended on him when he had a little money, and persecuted him relentlessly and persistently, have taken what he could ill spare, have denied that he gave anything, and have played a double game with son and brother-in-law, proves conclusively that she was a detestable woman. There is, indeed, not much to be urged in her defence, but what extenuating circumstances there are may be mentioned. A woman of no education or breeding, she doubtless thought she was doing a fine thing when she purchased the hand of a gentleman, and she was almost certainly little by little embittered by the failure of the hopes she had entertained. Though her husband was in debt when he married her—indeed, he married her only because he was in debt—she may have cherished the belief that he, the scion of a wealthy English county family, not only would sooner or later inherit money,

but would be able to give her a position in the world ; whereas, as has been shown, he remained to the end of his days a poor subaltern in a marching regiment.*

When a dignitary of York Minster found it inconvenient to preach on the day when it was his turn, it was the custom for him to ask John Hilyard, the bookseller in Stonegate, to find a substitute, who of course received a fee. It has been said that for a while after their breach the Archdeacon did nothing directly to his nephew's prejudice, and even so late as May 1750, though he could not countenance the arrangement, he raised no objection when Laurence took his turns. Shortly after this date, however, he instructed Hilyard that another substitute for himself must be found, and he gave the bookseller a broad hint that he would be displeased to find his nephew taking any other clergyman's turns in the Minster. It may be that Dr. Sterne had hitherto regarded the matter as of too little importance to interfere, and that he now learnt that Laurence, by his extra sermons, made an appreciable addition to his income. It may be that; having enlisted on his sister-in-law's side in her campaign against her son, he was determined to lose no opportunity to harass the

* Mrs. Sterne died in 1759, soon after she was released from the debtor's jail. Her daughter, Catherine, married a London publican, and passed out of her brother's life—to his great comfort—although she outlived him.

enemy ; and it may be, too, that he grew more vindictive as his own schemes failed. Preferment did not come to him so quickly as he thought his due, for, in spite of his political services to his party, the Whigs had not offered him any reward since 1735, except the appointment, on April 20, 1750, to the Archdeaconry of the East Riding (when he retired from the archdeaconry of Cleveland), and even this was but a sop to him as a consolation for the prebend of Westminster being given away from him.

The Archbishop of Canterbury having some time ago, applied to your Grace in my favour, for my succeeding Dr. Hayter in his Prebend at Westminster, when it should become vacant by his Promotion, I hope your Grace will pardon my application, upon Dr. Hayter's present promotion. I am very sensible it does but ill become me to mention to your Grace how often, and at what a vast expence, I have for a number of years been using my best Endeavours for promoting His Majesty's Service in this county ; but I hope your Grace will the more readily excuse my naming it, since I was so happy as to have your Grace express your Approbation of my Behaviour when you acquainted his present Grace of Canterbury, then Archbishop of York [*i.e.* Thomas Herring], how the Deanery of York was dispos'd of, and was pleas'd to add, that tho' I could not receive that Mark of the King's Favour, yet that Some Other was intended me. There is no doubt but your Grace will have many applications for this Pre-

bend, But if your Grace is inclin'd to honour me with your notice at this time, there can't long be wanting an opportunity, from Dr. Manningham's ill state of health, of distinguishing any other person whom your Grace is pleas'd to think of also.*

Not more successful had the Archdeacon been in his attacks on the Catholics. In 1747 he had printed a charge to the clergy, delivered the previous year, on "The Danger arising to our Civil and Religious Liberty from the great Increase of Papists," and this he had followed up in 1750 by waging war against the Nunnery at York: the futility of the latter attempt being shown in that the Nunnery survives to this day. So ambitious a man, thwarted at every turn, became eager to vent his spleen upon whomsoever he could, and here, at his very hand, was the matter of his nephew and the turns in the Minster. The correspondence tells its own tale.

The Rev. Laurence Sterne to the Rev. Francis Blackburne, Archdeacon of Cleveland, at Cleveland.

SUTTON, Nov. 3, 1750.

DEAR SIR,

Being last Thursday at York to preach The Dean's Turn, Hilyard the Bookseller, who

* Dr. Sterne to the Duke of Newcastle, October 14, 1749. British Museum, Add. MSS., 34719 f. 251. Dr. Hayter was nominated to the see of Norwich on October 13. Thomas Manningham, D.D., had held a prebend of Westminster since 1720; he died in 1750.

had spoke to me last week about Preaching Yrs, in Case you should not come Yrself, Told me, He had Just got a Letter from You directing him to get It supplied—but with an intimation that if I undertook it, That it might be done in such a way, as that it might not Disoblige your Friend the Precentor. If my doing it for You in any way could possibly have endangered that, my Regard to you on all Accounts is such, that You may depend upon it, No consideration whatever would have made me offer my Services, nor would I upon any Invitation have accepted it, Had you incautiously press'd it upon me; and therefore that my Undertaking it at all, upon Hilyard's telling me He should want a Preacher, was from a Knowledge, that as it could not in Reason, so it would not in Fact, give the least Handle to what You apprehended. I would not say this from bare conjectures, but known Instances, having preached for so many of Dr. Sterne's most Intimate Friends since our Quarrel without their feeling the Least Marks, or most distant Intimation That he took it unkindly. In which you will the readier believe me, from the following convincing Proof, that I have preached the 29th of May, the Precentor's own Turn, for these two last years together (not at his Request, for we are not upon such Terms) But at the Request of Mr. Berdmore whom He desired to get them taken care of, which He did, By applying Directly to me without the least apprehension or Scruple,—And If my preaching it the first year had been taken Amiss, I am morally cer-

tain That Mr. Berdmore, who is of a gentle and pacific Temper, would not have ventured to have ask'd me to preach it for him the 2d. Time, which I did without any Reserve this last Summer. The Contest between us, no Doubt, has been Sharp, But has not been made more so, by bringing our mutual Friends into it, who, in all things, (except inviting us to the same Dinner) have generally bore themselves towards Us, as if this Misfortune had never happen'd, and this, as on my Side, So I am willing to suppose on His, without any Alteration of our Opinions of them, unless to their Honor and Advantage. I thought it my Duty to Let you know, How this matter stood, to free you of any unnecessary Pain, which my preaching for You might Occasion upon this score, since upon all others, I flatter myself You would be Pleased, as in gen^l, it is not only more for the Credit of the Church, But of the Prebend^r himself who is absent, to have his Place supplied by a Preb^r of the Church where He can be had, rather than by another, tho' of equal Merit.

I told you above, That I had had a conference with Hilyard upon this Subject, and indeed should have said to him most of what I have said to You, But that the Insufferableness of his Behaviour put it out of my Power. The Dialogue between us had something singular in it, and I think I cannot better make you amends for this irksome Letter, than by giving you a particular Acc^t of it and the manner I found myself obliged to treat Him, wth, By the By, I should have done with still more

roughness But that He sheltered Himself under the Character of Yr. Plenipo ; How far His Excellency exceeded His Instructions You will perceive, I know, from the Acc^t I have given of the Hint in your Letter, which was all the Foundation of what passed. I step'd into his Shop, just after sermon on *All Saints*, When with an Air of much Gravity and Importance, He beckoned me to follow Him into an inner Room ; no sooner had he shut the Dore, But with the awful Solemnity of a Premier who held a *Lettre de Chachêt* upon whose Contents my Life or Liberty depended—after a minute's Pause—He thus opens his Commission. Sir—my Friend the A.Deacon of Cleveland not caring to preach his turn, as I conjectured, has left me to provide a Preacher,—But before I can take any Steps in it with Regard to You—I want first to know, Sir, upon what Footing You and Dr. Sterne are !—Yes Sir, How your Quarrel stands ?—What's that to You how our Quarrel stands ! What's that to you, you puppy ? But Sir, Mr. Blackburn would know—What's that to Him ?—But Sir, don't be angry, I only want to know of You, whether Dr. Sterne will not be displeased in Case You should preach—Go Look ; I've just now been preaching and You could not have fitter Opportunity to be satisfied.—I hope, Mr. Sterne, You are not angry.—Yes, I am ; But much more astonished at your *Impudence*.—I know not whether the Chancellor stepping in at this Instant and flapping to the Dore, Did not save his tender Soul the Pain of the last word ; However that be, He retreats

upon this unexpected Rebuff, Takes the Chancellor aside, asks his Advice, comes back submissive, begs Quarter, tells me Dr. Herring had quite satisfyde him as to the Grounds of his Scruple (tho' not of his Folly) and therefore beseeches me to let the Matter pass, and to preach the Turn. When I—as Percy complains in Harry IV.—

. . . . All *smarting* with my Wounds,
To be thus pestered with a Popinjay.
Out of my Grief and my Impatience
Answer'd neglectingly, I know not what;
For he made me Mad,
To see him Shine so bright and smell so sweet
And Talk so like a waiting Gentlewoman—
Bid him begone and seek Another fitter for his Turn.

But as I was too angry to have the perfect Faculty of recollecting Poetry, however pat to my Case, So I was forced to tell him in plain Prose, tho' somewhat elevated—That I would not preach, and that he might get a Parson where he could find one. But upon Reflection, That Don John had certainly exceeded his Instructions, and finding it to be just so, as I suspected—There being nothing in y^r Letter but a cautious Hint—and being moreover satisfyed in my mind, from this and twenty other instances of the same Kind, That this Impertinence of his, like many Others, had Issued not so much from His Heart, as from his Head, The Defects of which no One in Reason is Accountable for, I thought I sh^d wrong myself to remember it, and Therefore I parted friends, and told him I would take Care of the

Turn, w^{ch} I shall do with Pleasure. It is Time to beg Pardon of You for troubling You with so long a Letter upon so little a Subject—which as it has proceeded from the Motive I have told You, of ridding You of Uneasiness, together with a Mixture of Ambition not to lose either the Good Opinion, or the outward Marks of it, from any Man of Worth and Character, till I have done something to forfeit them, I know your Justice will excuse.

I am, Revd Sir, with true Esteem and Regard, of wch I beg you'l consider this Letter as a Testimony,

Y^r faithful & most aff^{ble}
Humble Serv^t

LAU. STERNE.

P.S. Our Dean arrives here on Saturday. My wife sends her Resp^{ts} to You and Y^r Lady.

I have broke open this Letter, to tell You, That as I was going with it to the Post, I encountered Hilyard, who desired me in the most pressing Manner, not to let this Affair Transpire—and that You might by no means be made acquainted with it—I therefore beg you will never let him feel the Effects of it, or even Let him know, You know ought about it—for I half promised him,—tho' as the Letter was wrote, I could but send it for your own Use.—So beg it may not hurt him, by any Ill Impression, as he has convinced me It proceeded only from Lack of Judgment.*

* British Museum, Egerton MSS., 2325.

A few days later, in another letter to Blackburne, dated November 12, Laurence expressed the hope that the Archdeacon would still let him act as his proxy.

If you have no friend you would choose to put up, you would even do me a favor to let me have them—I say a favor For, by the by, my Daughter will be Twenty Pounds a better Fortune by the favors, I've received of this kind from the Dean and the Residentiaries this Year, and as so much at least is annually and without much trouble to be picked up in our Pulpit, by any man who cares to make the Sermons. You who are a Father will easily guess and as easily excuse my motive.*

The matter need not be pursued here beyond the following extract from a letter, dated December 6, written by Dr. Sterne to Blackburne, and endorsed by the recipient, "Reprobation of his nephew Yorick and mention of the Popish nunnery at York."

I beg leave to rely upon your Pardon for taking the liberty I do with you in relation to your Turns of preaching in the Minster. What occasions it is, Mr. Hildyard's employing the last time the Only person unacceptable to me in the whole Church, an ungrateful and unworthy nephew of my own, the Vicar of Sutton; and I should be much obliged to you, if you would

* Fitzgerald: *Life of Sterne*, p. 65.

please either to appoint any person yourself, or leave it to your Register to appoint One when you are not here.—If any of my turns would Suit you better than your Own, I would change with you.*

* British Museum, Egerton MSS., 2325 f. 3.

CHAPTER VIII

" A POLITICAL ROMANCE "

(1759)

A cathedral quarrel—Dr. Fountayne and Dr. Topham—A war of pamphlets—Sterne intervenes on behalf of Dr. Fountayne—He writes " A Political Romance "—Sterne's letters to Cæsar Ward and Dr. Topham—A " Key " to " A Political Romance "—Dr. Topham withdraws from the contest—" A Political Romance " is suppressed—Subsequently republished.

It is happily not often necessary to revive the memory of a dispute between the clergy of a cathedral city after a hundred and sixty years ; but no biographer of Sterne can omit some mention of the great fight in 1758-9 between Dr. Fountayne, Dean of York since October 1747, and Francis Topham, LL.D., an ecclesiastical lawyer at York who held many positions connected with the diocese, being, according to the list compiled by his antagonist, " Master of the Faculties, Commissary to the Archbishop of York " (*i.e.* Commissary and Keeper-General of the Exchequer and Prerogative Courts of the Archbishop of York), " Official to the Archdeacon of the East Riding, Official to the Archdeacon of Cleveland, Official to the peculiar jurisdiction of Howdenshire, Official to the Precentor, Official to the Chancellor of the Church

of York, as well as official to several of the Prebendaries thereof." This wealthy pluralist had a keen eye to business, and, being a very grasping man, tried to get all the appointments he could. If he could get a well-paid place he was happy ; but, if such a one was not to be had, he would strive to secure another even with very slight emoluments. Not content with obtaining what he could for himself, he began to bestir himself to make provision at other people's expense for his son Edward.*

In 1758 Topham secured from Matthew Hutton, Archbishop of York, the promise of the reversion of his Commissaryship of the Archiepiscopal Courts, for Edward, then aged eight ; but, in consequence of the representations of Dr. Fountainne, the Archbishop found it impossible to ratify the arrangement. Topham was furious, and at a sessions dinner, at which Sterne was present as a magistrate of the liberty of St. Peter, a personal altercation arose between him and the Dean of York. Thenceforth between them there was open war, and most of the leading clergy took sides ; the principal combatants being, with Dr. Topham, the Archbishop and Dr. Sterne, and with the Dean, Archdeacon Blackburne, Chancellor Herring, and Mr. Prebendary Sterne.

* Edward Topham (1751-1820), journalist and playwright, dandy and man about town, the protector of Mary Wells the actress, editor of the *World*, and author of the *Life of the late John Elwes*.

From personal recriminations the partisans proceeded to conflict by pamphlet. First, in December 1748, appeared :

"A LETTER address'd to the REVEREND the DEAN of YORK, in which is given a full detail of some very extraordinary behaviour of his, in relation to his denial of a promise made by him to Dr. TOPHAM."

It will be seen, from the title, that Dr. Topham had shifted his ground. In the matter of the reversion he had found his position untenable, and he now ignored that matter, and attacked the Dean for having given to Laurence Sterne in 1751 the Commissaryship of Pickering and Pocklington, which, he alleged, had been promised to him. It was the last throw of the desperate gamester, for not only was the affair more than seven years old, but the emoluments of the place were estimated at a bare five guineas! Very shortly after Dr. Topham's pamphlet appeared the Dean's rejoinder :

"AN ANSWER to a LETTER address'd to the DEAN of YORK in the name of DR. TOPHAM"; and to this, early in January, Topham made answer in

"A REPLY to the ANSWER to a LETTER lately addressed to the DEAN of YORK."

The hint in this third pamphlet that Sterne had assisted the Dean in his reply brought the Vicar of Sutton into the forefront of the battle, and most lustily he belaboured his antagonist

in a *jeu d'esprit*, written in about a couple of weeks :

“ A POLITICAL ROMANCE, addressed to —— Esq. of YORK. To which is subjoined a KEY.”

This contained also two letters, dated, “ Sutton, January 20, 1759.” The first was evidently addressed to the printer, probably Cæsar Ward, and it is well worthy of reproduction, if only to show the absolute confidence the untried humorist had in his powers.

SIR,

You write me word that the letter I wrote to you, and now stiled The Political Romance, is printing ; and that, as it was drop'd by carelessness, to make some amends, you will overlook the printing of it yourself, and take care to see that it comes right into the world.

I was just going to return you thanks, and to beg withal you would take care that the child be not laid at my door ; but having, this moment, perused the Reply to the Dean of York's Answer, it has made me alter my mind in that respect ; so that, instead of making you the request I intended, I do here desire that the child be filiated upon me, Laurence Sterne, Prebendary of York, etc. etc. And I do, accordingly, own it for my own true and lawful offspring.

My reason for this is plain ; for as, you see, the writer of that Reply has taken upon him to invade this incontestable right of another man's in a thing of this kind, it is high time for every

man to look to his own ; since, upon the same grounds, and with half the degree of anger, that he affirms the production of that very reverend gentleman's to be the child of many fathers, some one in his spight (for I am not without my friends of that stamp) may run headlong into the other extream, and swear that mine had no father at all :—And therefore, to make use of Bays's plea in the "Rehearsal," for Prince Pretty-Man, I merely do it, as he says, "for fear it should be said to be no body's child at all."

I have only to add two things : First, That at your peril you do not presume to alter or transpose one word, nor rectify one false spelling, nor so much as add or diminish one comma or tittle in or to my Romance :—For if you do,—In case any of the descendents of Curl should think fit to invade my copy-right, and print it over again in my teeth, I may not be able, in a court of justice, to swear strictly to my own child, after you had so large a share in the begetting it.

In the next place, I do not approve of your quaint conceit at the foot of the title-page of my Romance,—it would only set people on smiling a page or two before I give them leave ; —and besides, all attempts either at wit or humour, in that place, are a forestalling of what a slender entertainment of those kinds are prepared within : Therefore I would have it stand thus :

YORK :

PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1759

(Price One Shilling.)

I know you will tell me, That it is set too high ; and as a proof, you will say, That this last Reply to the Dean's Answer does consist of near as many pages as mine, and yet is all sold for Sixpence. But mine, my dear Friend, is quite a different story :—It is a web wrought out of my own brain, of twice the fineness of this which he has spun out of his ; and besides, I maintain it, it is of a more curious pattern, and could not be afforded at the price that his is sold at, by any honest workman in Great Britain.

Moreover, Sir, you do not consider that the writer is interested in his story, and that it is his business to set it a-going at any price : And indeed, from the information of persons conversant in paper and print, I have very good reason to believe, if he should sell every pamphlet of them, he would inevitably be a great loser by it. This I verily believe, and am,

Dear Sir,

Your obliged Friend,

and humble servant,

LAURENCE STERNE.

In the second letter, which was addressed to Topham, the author defended himself from some personal charges brought against him in the Doctor's reply to the Dean's answer.

I beg pardon for clapping this upon the back of the Romance—which is done out of no disrespect to you [he added in a postscript]. But the vehicle stood ready at the door,—and as I

was to pay the whole fare, and there was room enough behind it,—it was the cheapest and readiest conveyance I could think of.

The characters were but thinly disguised, but it may be as well, before going further, to give the “Key.” *

Late Parson . . .	APB. H-RR-G.
Parson of the Parish . . .	APB. H-TT-N.
John the Clerk . . .	DEAN OF YORK FOUNT--N.
Trim . . .	DR. T-PH-M.
Mark Slender . . .	DR. BRAITH--T.
Lorry Slim . . .	LAWRENCE ST--NE.
William Doe . . .	MR. BIRDM--E.
Village . . .	York.
Author . . .	MR. LAWRENCE ST--NE.

The “Key” begins: “This Romance was, by some mischance or other, dropp’d in the Minster-Yard, York, and pick’d up by a member of a small political club in that city; where it was carried, and publickly read to the members the last club night.”

Criticism of the “Romance” by the different members of the club form the subject of the Key, which abounds in humorous satire, with less of the coarseness by which some passages of the Romance are disfigured. Nearly all the characters introduced may be identified with persons then living at York, who were members of a convivial club held at Sunton’s Coffee-house in Coney-Street.

“A Political Romance” is a very delightful

* Davies: *Memoir of the York Press*, p. 26.

skit, though Sterne dealt many hard blows, and was, of course, extremely severe in his strictures upon Dr. Topham, whose character, he wrote, "was that of a little, dirty, pimping, pettifogging, ambidextrous fellow—who neither cared what he did or said of any, provided he could get a penny by it."

What a world of finding and proving we have had of late in this little village of ours, about an old cast pair of black plush breeches, about which *John* our parish-clerk, about ten years ago, it seems, had made a promise to one *Trim*, who is our sexton and dog-whipper.

So Sterne began the attack. Then he proceeded to put the matter in the right light :

I must first set you right in one very material point, in which I have misled you, as to the true cause of all this uproar amongst us which does not take its rise, as I then told you, from the affair of the breeches, but, on the contrary, the whole affair of the breeches has taken its rise from it.—To understand which, you must know, that the first beginning of the squabble was not betwixt *John* the parish-clerk, and *Trim* the sexton, but betwixt the parson of the parish and the said master *Trim*, about an old *watch-coat*, that had hung up many years in the church, which *Trim* had set his heart upon ; and nothing would serve *Trim*, but he must take it home, in order to have it converted into

a warm under-waistcoat for his wife, and a *jerkin* for himself against winter.

Sterne's interest in the dispute is said to have been largely due to the fact that a friend had expected the reversion of the place which Dr. Topham had endeavoured to secure for his son, and this may have given an added sting to his pen. It is usually said that "A Political Romance" was not published during the author's life, but this statement is inaccurate. It was printed in January 1759, but suppressed—according to John Croft, "as it gave offence to the dignity of the Church,"* but actually because Dr. Topham informed the author that if the pamphlet was withheld, he would resign his pretensions to the reversion in question to the next candidate.† "A Political Romance" was, however, published, somewhat revised, and without the Key or the letters, in 1769, in "decent duodecimo," bearing the imprint of J. Murdock, London. After Sterne's death it was issued in the collected editions of his works, with a new title: "The History of a Good Warm Watch-Coat; With which the present Possessor is not content to cover his own Shoulders, unless he can cut out of it a Petticoat for his Wife, and a Pair of Breeches for his Son."

* *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 229.

† Hall-Stevenson: *Memoir of Sterne*.

CHAPTER IX

STERNE AND HIS WIFE

Sterne and his wife on good terms at first—The birth of their children—Mrs. Sterne no companion for her husband—Said to have sat for Mrs. Shandy—Mrs. Sterne's letter to Mrs. Montagu—Sterne's philanderings—Mrs. Sterne's illness—Sterne disappointed with marriage—Catherine de Fourmantelle.

OF the relations between Laurence Sterne and his wife in the earlier years of their union nothing is known ; but, accepting the axiom that happy marriages have no history, it may be assumed that they were on good terms. Not until October 1, 1745, was their first child born, a daughter, named Lydia after the mother's sister, but she died on the following day ; the second and last child, also named Lydia, was born on the first day of December two years later.

Mrs. Sterne, who was certainly at first very much in love with her husband, behaved very well during his quarrel with his mother and sister, and, though the conduct of these women was such that she could have no regard for them, not only did she not object to his helping them with money that was wanted at home, but she also showed a readiness herself to assist them in many ways. On this and doubtless

on other occasions, she did her best to be agreeable to Sterne; but, while he could appreciate her kindness and good-will, he found it impossible to make a companion of her. Genius is often as much a curse as a blessing; great wits must live apart. It has been said that Mrs. Sterne was not stupid; but if it is true, as most writers are agreed, that her husband drew her as Mrs. Shandy, she certainly was not intelligent. Probably she would have made an excellent mate for the everyday parson, but she had not the qualities to enable her to retain the affection of the volatile "Yorick." The difference in their characters alone accounts sufficiently for their disagreement. He was fond of gaiety, loved a jest, was quick in repartee, and revelled in argument; she was merely a good housewife. "That she is not a woman of science," the elder Shandy is made to say of his wife, "is her misfortune—but she might ask a question." * But that was exactly what she would not do.

She had a way, and that was never to refuse her assent and consent to any proposition my father laid before her, merely because she did not understand it, or had no ideas to the principal word or term of art upon which the tenet or proposition rolled. She contented herself with doing all that her godfathers and godmothers promised for her and no more; and

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. VI. ch. xxxix.

so would go on, using a hard word twenty years together, and replying to it, too, if it was a verb, in all its moods and tenses, without giving herself any trouble to inquire about it.

Again and again Sterne uttered the same complaint, and he gave delightfully ludicrous instances of his trouble, notably in the well-known discussion on fortifications, and in the even more famous debate on putting the boy into breeches. It is impossible to resist the temptation to quote a small portion of that delightfully humorous chapter, if only to revel in Sterne's wonderful mastery of dialogue :

"They should be of leather," said my father, turning him about again.

"They will last him," said my mother, "the longest."

"But he can have no linings to 'em," replied my father.—

"He cannot," said my mother.

"'Twere better to have them of fustian," quoth my father.

"Nothing could be better," quoth my mother.

"—Except dimity," replied my father.

"'Tis best of all," replied my mother.

"—One must not give him his death, however," interrupted my father.

"By no means," said my mother :—and so the dialogue stood still again.

"I am resolved, however," quoth my father, breaking silence the fourth time, "he shall have no pockets in them."

“—There is no occasion for any,” said my mother.—

“—I mean in his coat and waistcoat,” cried my father.

“—I mean so too,” replied my mother.

“—Though if he gets a gig or a top—Poor souls! it is a crown and a sceptre to them,—they should have where to secure it.”

“Order it as you please, Mr. Shandy,” replied my mother.

“But don’t you think it right?” added my father, pressing the point home to her.

“Perfectly,” said my mother, “if it pleases you, Mr. Shandy.”

“—There’s for you!” cried my father, losing temper—“Pleases me! You never will distinguish, Mrs. Shandy, nor shall I ever teach you to do it, betwixt a point of pleasure and a point of convenience.” *

It must have been after some such conversation that Sterne uttered his humorous complaint.

Cursed luck for a man to be master of one of the finest chains of reasoning in nature, and have a wife at the same time with such a head-piece that he cannot hang up a single inference within side of it to save his soul from destruction.

Yet Mrs. Sterne cannot have been a stupid woman, for she wrote a good letter, as witness the following, addressed to her cousin, Mrs. Montagu, “Queen of the Blue-stockings”: †

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. VI. ch. xviii.

† To Mr. Walter Sichel must be given the credit of having been the first to discover the relationship between Mrs. Sterne

Mrs. Sterne to Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu *

SUTTON, March ye 9th (1753).

DEAR MADAM,

I return you my sincere and hearty thanks for the Favour of your most welcome letter ; which had I received in a more happy Hour, wou'd have made me almost Frantick with Joy ; for being thus cruelly separated from all my Friends, the least mark of their kindness towards me, or Remembrance of me gives me unspeakable Delight. But the Dismal Account I receiv'd at the same time of my poor Sister, has render'd my Heart Incapable of Joy, nor can I ever know Comfort till I hear of her recovery.†

Believe me, Dear Madam, you were never more mistaken than when you imagine that Time and Absence remove you from my Remembrance. I do assure you I do not so easily part with what affords me so great Delight ; on the Contrary I spare no pains to improve every little accident that recalls you to my Remembrance, as the only amends which can be made me for those Unhappinesses my Situation deprives me of. As a proof of this I must inform you that about three weeks ago I took a long Ride through very bad weather, and worse Roads, merely for the satisfaction of enjoying and Mrs. Montagu. Elizabeth Clarke, by her first husband, was Elizabeth Lumley's grandmother, and by her second husband Elizabeth Montagu's grandmother.

* Mrs. Climençon : *Elizabeth Montagu*, Vol. II. p. 27. This and the other letters addressed to Mrs. Montagu are printed in this work by kind permission of Mrs. Climençon and Mr. John Murray.

† Mrs. Sterne's sister died during this year.

a Conversation with a Gentleman who, though unknown to you, had conceiv'd the highest opinion of you from the perusal of several of your Letters, for which he was indebted to Mrs. Clayton. Had this Gentleman nothing else to recommend him, it certainly would be Sufficient to have made me desirous of his acquaintance; but he is both a Man of Sense and good Breeding, so that I am not a little pleas'd with my new Acquaintance. Your supposition of my Sister's having boasted to me of her Children is doubtless extremely Natural, I wish it had been as Just; But I can in three words inform you of all I know about 'em,—to wit their number and their Names, for which I am indebted to Johnny. Had my Lydia been so obliging as to have made them the Subject of her Letters, I shou'd by this time have had a tolerable Idea of them, by considering what she said with some abatement: but as it is I no more know whether they are Black, Brown, or Fair, Wise, or other wise, Gentle, or Froward, than the Man in the Moon. Pray is this strange Silence on so Interesting a Subject owing to her profound Wisdom or her abundant Politeness? But be it to which it will, as soon as she recovers her Health I shall insist on all the satisfaction she can give on this head. In the meantime I rejoice to find they have your approbation and am truly thankful that Nature has done her part, which indeed is the most material, though I frankly own I shall not be the first to Forgive any slights that Dame Fortune may be dispos'd to show them.

Your god-Daughter, as in Duty bound, sends her best Respects to you. I will hope that she may enjoy what her poor Mother in vain Laments, the want of a more intimate acquaintance with her Kindred.

Be so good as to make Mr. Sterne's and my compliments to Mr. Montagu, and Believe me,
Dear Madam,

Your most affectionate Cousin,
and oblig'd Humble Servant,

E. STERNE.

Mrs. Sterne would accompany her husband when he played on his bass-viol, but music seems to have been the only interest they had in common, except their daughter, to whom both were deeply attached. Mrs. Sterne did not care for books, nor is there anything to show that she took the slightest interest in the composition of "Tristram Shandy," or was elated by the great success which followed on its publication. Sterne, indeed, used sometimes to read aloud a few chapters, but it is impossible to resist the inference that he did more so for his own gratification than for hers. The gulf between them, which became wider as the years passed, is amusingly described in "Tristram Shandy."

Being taken up with the project of knitting my father a pair of large worsted breeches (the thing is common sense), and she not caring to

be put out of her way, staid at home at Shandy Hall during the expedition.

Allowance must, of course, be made for the inevitable exaggeration of these passages, but it can be seen that underlying it was a grievance at the incompatibility of temperament, which, it must be admitted, bore as hardly upon the woman as upon the man. Finding himself bored at home, Sterne, like the majority of husbands in like case, sought amusement outside, and then the rift in the lute deepened. According to Sterne, his wife's temper became insupportable; according to Hall-Stevenson, who was not likely to take a view unfavourable to his friend, and also John Croft, who was certain to do so, Sterne was unfaithful to his wife.* Croft adds, with a maid in his own house. The charge of infidelity will presently be dealt with; but now it may be said that support of Sterne's allegation as regards his wife's temper may be found in the fact that in the autumn of 1758, or the following spring, Mrs. Sterne went temporarily out of her mind.

Mrs. Shandy fancied herself the Queen of Bohemia. Tristram, her husband, to amuse and induce her to take the air, proposed coursing in the way practised in Bohemia. For that purpose he procured bladders, and filled them

* "Eugenius": *Memoir of Sterne*; Croft in the *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 234.

with beans, and tied them to the wheels of a single horse chair. When he drove madam into a stubble field, with the motion of the carriage and the bladders, rattle bladder, rattle; it alarmed the hares, and the greyhounds were ready to take them.*

Though every care was taken of her at Sutton, the malady increased, and at last it was necessary to place her in confinement in the charge of a mad-doctor at a private house at York. In a few months she recovered, and returned to the rectory; but she and her husband ever afterwards occupied separate rooms, and their relations henceforth were merely those of more or less good-natured tolerance.

It has been said, in an earlier chapter, that in the whole course of his life Sterne probably never loved any woman; but this statement must be supplemented by the admission that, from the age of forty-six or thereabouts, he was always in love, or believing himself to be in love, or feigning to be in love. Catherine de Fourmantelle, Mrs. Ferguson ("my witty widow"), Mrs. Vesey, Lady P. (Percy?), and Mrs. Draper, all received lover-like letters from him. "I must always have a Dulcinea in my head," he declared: and he believed this to be good for him mentally and artistically.

Having been in love with one princess or

* Croft: *Scrapeana*, p. 22.

another almost all my life, and I hope I shall go on so till I die, being firmly persuaded, that if ever I do a mean action, it must be in some interval betwixt one passion and another : whilst this interregnum lasts, I always perceive my heart locked up—I can scarce find it to give misery a sixpence : and therefore I always get out of it as far as I can, and the moment I am rekindled, I am all generosity and goodwill again ; and would do anything in the world, either for or with anyone, if they will but satisfy me there is not sin in it.—But in saying this—sure I am commending the passion—not myself.*

Did Sterne pass from censurable words to criminal actions ? is a question which faces the biographer, and cannot be evaded. Such a matter cannot, of course, definitely be settled a hundred and fifty years after a man's death ; but, dealing with it on the evidence that has been handed down, and considering this in the light of Sterne's character, it seems as clear as anything can be that the elderly Adonis's philanderings were confined to an intellectual sensuality or sentimentality.

I am glad you are in love [he wrote to Mr. W. from Coxwold, May 28, 1765]. "Twill cure you at least of the spleen, which has a bad effect on both man and woman—I myself must ever have some Dulcinea in my head—it har-

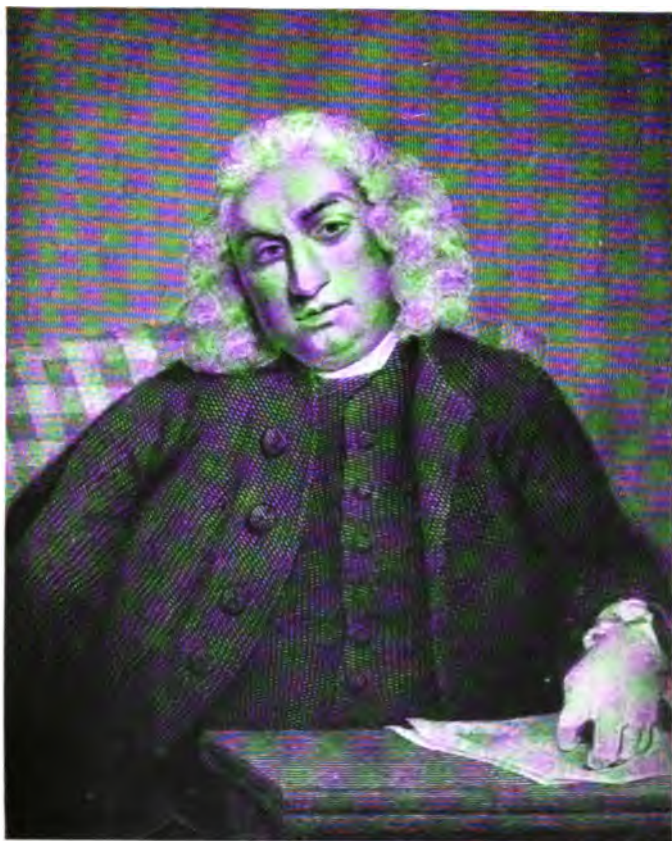
* *A Sentimental Journey.*

monises the soul—and in those cases I just endeavour to make the lady believe so, or rather I begin to first make myself believe that I am in love—but I carry on my affairs quite in the French way sentimentally—"l'amour (say they) "n'est rien sans sentiment"—Now notwithstanding they make such a pother about the *word*, they have no precise idea annex'd to it—and so much for that same subject called love.

Sterne loved woman, not women ; and while he dallied with many he devoted himself exclusively to none.

God bless them all ! [he wrote in "A Sentimental Journey"]. There is not a man on the earth who loves them so much as I do. After all the foibles I have seen, and all the satires I have read against them, still I love them ; being firmly persuaded that a man who has not a sort of an affection for the whole sex, is incapable of loving a single one as he ought.

The first flirtation of Sterne that has been recorded was with his "dear Kitty," whom he addressed as Miss Formantel, but whose name, correctly written, appears as Catherine de Fourmantelle. She was of the French Protestant house of Béranger de Fourmantelle, the members of which fled to England in the reign of Louis XIV., after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, when their property in France and



DR. JOHNSON.

(See p. 217.)

From an engraving by Robert Graves after a portrait by Reynolds.

in St. Domingo was held forfeit to the crown. The history of the family is obscure, but it seems that subsequently an elder sister of Catherine entered the Roman Catholic Church, returned to Paris, and was rewarded by the restoration of the property. She seems to have rendered no pecuniary assistance to her mother or to Catherine, and, according to Isaac Disraeli, the latter for a time earned her livelihood as governess to the children of the Countess of Bristol. Later she became a professional singer, and in the winter of 1759 she came to York to perform at the Subscription Concerts that were a feature of the season. There has been preserved an announcement that, on the evening of November 29, 1759, the day of general rejoicings for Lord Hawke's victory, a concert of instrumental and vocal music was performed in the York Assembly Room, "the vocal part by Miss Formantel and the best voices in town."

At York Sterne made the acquaintance of Mlle de Fourmantelle, and was undoubtedly attracted by her. Various absurd statements as regards their relations were circulated after Sterne's death. It was said that he proposed marriage to her, and then jilted her, which affected her so deeply that her mind became unhinged and that the miserable man made copy out of her by drawing a picture of her in her affliction as Maria in "A Sentimental Journey." Since, however, Sterne was married

eighteen years before he met her, and that even if he would he could not have hidden that fact, which was known to every one at York, it is unnecessary to contradict the legend in detail. That Sterne saw her frequently in the lodgings she shared with her mother at Mrs. Joliffe's in Stone Gate is not to be denied, and that he made love to her is evident from his letters *; but matters went no further than that. As Isaac Disraeli put it, "a sentimental interest existed between them."

Sunday.

Miss,

I shall be out of all humour with you, and besides will not paint your picture in black, which best becomes you, unless you accept of a few Bottles of Calcavillo, which I have ordered my Man to leave at the Dore in my absence;—the Reason of this trifling Present, you shall know on Tuesday night, and I half insist upon it, that you invent some plausible excuse to be home by 7.

Yrs.

YORICK.

MY DEAR KITTY,

If this Billet catches you in Bed, you are a lazy sleepy little slut, and I am a giddy, foolish, unthinking fellow for keeping you so late up; but this Sabbath is a day of sorrow, for I shall not see my dear creature, unless you

* The letters to Mlle de Fourmantelle in this and the following chapters are printed by kind permission of Mr. John Murray.

meet me at Taylor's half an hour after twelve—but in this, do as you like. I have ordered Matthew to turn thief and steal you a quart of honey. What is Honey to the sweetness of thee, who are sweeter than all the Flowers it comes from. I love you to distraction, Kitty, and will love you to Eternity. So adieu! and believe what time only will prove me, that I am
Y^r.

Thursday.

MY DEAR KITTY,

I have sent you a Pot of Sweetmeats, and a Pot of Honey, neither of them half so sweet as yourself; but don't be vain upon this, or presume to grow sour upon this character of sweetness I give you; for if you do, I shall send you a Pot of Pickles (by way of contraries) to sweeten you up and bring you to yourself again. Whatever changes happen to you, believe me that I am unalterably yours, and according to y^r motto, such a one, my dear Kitty, *qui ne changera pas, que en Mourant,*

L. S.

MY DEAR KITTY,

I beg you will accept of the inclosed Sermon, which I do not make you a present of merely because it was wrote by myself, but because there is a beautiful character in it, of a tender and compassionate mind in the picture given of Elijah. Read it, my dear Kitty, and believe me when I assure you that I see something of the same kind and gentle disposition

in your heart which I have painted in the Prophet's, which has attach'd me so much to you and your Interests that I shall live and dye your affectionate and faithful

LAURENCE STERNE.

P.S.—If possible I will see you this afternoon, before I go to Mr. Fothergils. Aideu, dear Friend! I had the pleasure to drink y^r health last night.

These letters must not be taken too literally, and the protestations of affection should be read in the light of playful philanderings. Most writers on Sterne take it for granted that because Mlle de Fourmantelle came to London when Sterne was there she did so because he was there. If this was so, then all arguments as to the innocence of their relations fall to the ground; but clearly this was not the case. The girl was a professional singer, who had gone to York to fulfil an engagement; and when that engagement was fulfilled, naturally she left York and came to the metropolis to seek further work. It is inconceivable that Sterne would have asked her to convey "My service to y^r Mama," at the moment she was about to leave her home to follow him; but there is further proof that her coming to London had no connection with Sterne's presence there, for the latter, writing to her on April 1, 1760, begins his letter: "I am truly sorry from y^r

account in your letter to find you do not leave York till the 14th, because it shortens the time I hoped to have stole in your company when you come." Those who read this letter, presently to be printed, with its alternate passages of affection and reference to his social engagements, will realise that it is not a communication from a lover to his mistress. Indeed, fervently as he expresses his desire to see her, when she did arrive in London he could hardly find an hour to visit her. As Mr. Adams Sherman Hill points out, in one of the best articles ever written on Sterne, the warmth of that gentleman's epistles usually increased or decreased in the ratio of the distance between him and his correspondent.

CHAPTER X

"TRISTRAM SHANDY"

(1759—1760)

"Tristram Shandy," begun as a lampoon, soon outgrows the original conception—The MS. offered to the Dodsleys—Eventually published at York—Sterne's letter to the Dodsleys—The book attracts attention in York, and later in London—Sterne goes to London—Dodsley takes over publication—Advertisements—Hogarth contributes frontispiece to second edition—Letters from Mlle de Fourmantelle and Sterne to David Garrick—Parodies—Reasons for the great success of "Tristram Shandy"—Attacked by Walpole and Goldsmith—Other critics—Sterne on his adverse reviewers—The prototypes of Dr. Slop and Dr. Kunastrokius—Sterne's defence—Dr. Hill's account of Sterne—Garrick, Warburton, and Sterne—Sterne's denial of any impropriety in "Tristram Shandy."

THE praise accorded to "A Political Romance" was very gratifying to Sterne, who was delighted to find himself the master of satirical gifts of which, probably, he had been unaware. He did not, however, immediately jump to the conclusion that he was a heaven-sent genius; nor did he, as some writers suggest, sit down forthwith to write a literary masterpiece. When he began "Tristram Shandy" his aim was modest. He had successfully caricatured a cathedral squabble in "A Political Romance"; he now proposed to lampoon other acquaintances, notably Dr. Burton, and at the same time present a defence of himself. That he had any more serious artistic purpose is a theory that will not

hold water. Henry Fielding, desirous originally only to caricature "Pamela," produced "Joseph Andrews." So with Sterne, as with Fielding, the hitherto latent genius carried the author far away from the original humble conception; and thus it happened that, instead of an ephemeral work that would have passed into oblivion with "A Political Romance," the world is richer by a masterpiece.

How soon after "A Political Romance" was finished "Tristram Shandy" was begun there is no evidence to show, but that the interval was brief is made clear by the fact that the first two volumes were finished not later than May 1759; that is to say, they were written in about three months. Some pages were then read one evening after dinner to a company of neighbours assembled at Stephen Croft's for the purpose, but most of them fell asleep, which so nettled the author that he threw the manuscript into the fire, whence it was rescued by the host.* This was but the first of a succession of disappointments. Sterne offered the work to the York booksellers, who, to quote John Croft, who probably had the details of the business from Stephen, "would not have anything to say to it, nor wou'd they offer any price for it." The author, happily, declined to accept their sentence as final, and appealed from their judgment to that of the Dodsleys, booksellers and

* *Whitefoord Papers*, Vol. I. p. 229.

publishers, in Pall Mall.* Sterne's choice may have fallen upon them because, being the sons of that Robert Dodsley who kept the Free School at Mansfield, they may in their youth, before they came to the metropolis, have known some of the author's Nottinghamshire relations. The Dodsleys offered £20 for the copyright, but Sterne had demanded £50, and refused to accept the smaller sum. Like all great writers, Sterne was under no misapprehension as to the merits of his work ; but he could not afford to publish it himself, and it seemed as if nothing could be done. Then, while the author was still striving to bear his disappointment with equanimity, one of his friends at York, a Mr. Lee, described by John Croft as " a Batchelor of a liberal turn of Mind," to his eternal credit offered to advance £100 towards printing the work. Needless to say, Sterne eagerly and gratefully seized this chance to present the book to the world, and without delay some two hundred copies were printed at York. No sooner was this arranged than Sterne made another attempt to secure Dodsley as his London publisher.

To Robert (?) Dodsley, bookseller, London

[YORK, (October ?), 1859.]

SIR,

What you wrote to me in June last, in answer to my demand of 50*l.* for the " Life and

* The firm at this time consisted of James and Robert Dodsley, but the elder retired during this year, and it is doubtful to which brother Sterne addressed his letters.

Opinions of Tristram Shandy"—"That it was too much to risk on a single volume, which, if it happened not to sell, would be hard upon your brother"—I think a most reasonable objection in him against giving me the price I thought my work deserved. You need not be told how much authors are inclined to over-rate their productions:—for my own part, I hope I am an exception; for if I could find out by any arcanum, the precise value of mine, I declare Mr. Dodsley should have it 20 per cent. below its value.

I propose, therefore, to print a lean edition, in two small volumes, of the size of "Rasselas," and on the same paper and type, at my own expense, merely to feel the pulse of the world, and that I may know what price to set upon the remaining volumes, from the reception of these. If my book sells, and has the run our critics expect, I propose to free myself of all future troubles of this kind, and bargain with you, if possible, for the rest as they come out, which will be every six months. If my book fails of success, the loss falls where it ought to do. The same motives which inclined me first to offer you this trifle, incline me to give you the whole profits of the sale (except what Mr. Hinxman sells here, which will be a great many), and to have them sold only at your shop, upon the usual terms in these cases. The book shall be printed here, and the impression sent up to you; for as I live at York, and shall correct every proof myself, it shall go perfect into the world, and be printed in so creditable a way

as to paper, type, etc., as to do no dishonour to you, who, I know, never chuse to print a book meanly. Will you patronise my book upon these terms, and be as kind a friend to it as if you had bought the copyright ?

Be so good as to favour me with a line by the return, and believe me,

Sir,

Your obliged and most humble servant,

LAURENCE STERNE.

P.S. All locality is taken out of the book—the satire general; notes are added where wanted, and the whole made more saleable—about a hundred and fifty pages added—and to conclude, a strong interest formed and forming in its behalf, which I hope will soon take off the few I shall print on this *coup d'essai*. I had desired Mr. Hinxman to write the purport of this to you by this post, but lest he should omit it, or not sufficiently explain my intention, I thought it best to trouble you with a letter myself.

Direct to me, *Prebendary of York*.

In due course a copy was sent to Dodsley, who, says John Croft, “ returned for answer that they were not saleable; however that he would give him £40 for the Copyright, provided that he would stand half the chance of the sale of the remaining copies that were left, which was refused as Sterne had parted with several of them among his friends.” * There the matter rested for a while.

* *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 227.

Even before the book appeared there was some gossip about it which reached friends far away from York.

I suppose, my good lady, by what you say in your letter, "that I am busy writing an extraordinary book," that your intelligence comes from York—the fountain-head of all chit-chat news—and—no matter" [he wrote to "my witty widow," Mrs. Ferguson, from York, November 19, 1759]. Now for your desire of knowing the reason of my turning author? Why truly I am tired of employing my brains for other people's advantage.—'Tis a foolish sacrifice I have made for some years to an ungrateful person. I depend much upon the candour of the publick, but I shall not pick out a jury to try the merit of my book amongst *****, and till you read my "Tristram," do not, like some people, condemn it.—Laugh I am sure you will at some passages.

Though "A Political Romance" was suppressed, it had made Sterne notorious in and about York, and when "Tristram Shandy" was published people there, knowing of Sterne's quarrels with his uncle Jaques, and with Dr. Topham, were curious to see if there was any mention of them in the book. They were gratified by finding the attack on their distinguished townsman, Dr. Burton; and every one, regarding the work as a *roman-à-clef*, tried to find the prototypes of the other characters. In

a few days nearly the whole edition, exclusive of some copies sent to Dodsley, was sold out, and the question of reprinting came up for consideration.

The book was published in January 1760, and at the beginning of March Stephen Croft one morning met Sterne in the street at Sutton, and asked if he would accompany him to town, and overcame all objections on the score of expense by insisting that he should come as a guest. Then Sterne declared that he could not leave his wife in the state she was in, but Croft pointed out that, since Sterne could not possibly do any good by staying, he had much better come to London. Sterne demurred no longer and agreed, "with this Proviso, that he was to have an hour's leave to go home to pack up his best breeches." *

Sir Walter Scott says that "Sterne went to London to enjoy his fame," but, as a matter of fact, Sterne was entirely unaware that any one in the Metropolis had ever heard of him. A great and pleasurable surprise, therefore, was awaiting him. Giving his companion the slip, Sterne sallied forth early the morning after their arrival, and made his way from their lodgings at Mr. Cholmley's, Chapel Street, to Dodsley's shop. There he inquired how "Tristram Shandy" fared; and was informed that a copy of the book could not be had for love or money.

* *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 227.

Soon after Mr. Croft and Cholmley passing by Pall Mall in a coach, who should they see in Dodsley's shop but Sterne, who accosting them, said that he was mortgaging his brains to Dodsley for £50, the overplus of £600, that he stood out for about the bargain of £600 that he offered him for the copy of the 2 volumes of "Tristram Shandy," and for 2 volumes of Sermons which he was to compose in 2 months time, under the title of "Yorick's Sermons," and on a further undertaking that he was to engage to write a volume of "Tristram Shandy" every year, and so to continue the work during his life—and that he stood out for the odd £50, when the gentlemen advised him to close with Dodsley, which he did, after which he returned to Chapell Street and came skipping into the room and said he was the richest man in Europe.*

The original agreement between Sterne and James Dodsley has happily been preserved.

It is hereby agreed between Mr. Dodsley and Mr. Sterne, that Mr. Sterne sells the Copy Right of the first and 2d Vols. of "Tristram Shandy" for the Sum of two hundred and fifty pounds—fifty pds. to be paid in hand—and that the remainder at the end of six months—Memdn. the Profits of the Books already printed to be all Mr. Sterne's—the receipt of which fifty pounds I hereby acknowledge. And it is further agreed that the 3rd and 4th Volumes, are to be sold and bought for the sum of (four hundred

* *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 228.

Guineas erased) three hundred and eighty pounds.

L. STERNE.
JAS. DODSLEY.*

Mar. 8, 1760.

Witness, RICHD. BERENGER.

The book had already been advertised in *The Public Advertiser* of January 1 :

This Day is published

Printed on a superfine Writing Paper and a new Letter, in two Volumes

Price 5s, neatly bound,

The Life and Opinions of TRISTRAM SHANBY [*sic*], Gentleman.

York, printed for and sold by John Hinxkan (Successor to the late Mr. Hildyard) Bookseller, in Stonegate ; J. Dodaley, in Pall-mall ; and Mr. Cooper, in Pater-noster Row, London ; and by all the Booksellers in Great Britain and Ireland.

This advertisement was not repeated, but after his interview with Sterne Doddsley began to prepare a second edition, which was announced in *The Morning Chronicle* of March 11 :

In a few days will be published,

In two Volumes, Price 4s. sewed,

The Second Edition of

the LIFE and OPINIONS of TRISTRAM SHANDY, Gent.

Printed for R. & J. Dodaley, in Pallmall.

On March 15 this volume was again inserted in *The London Chronicle*, and yet again on March 22, with the additional line, "With a frontispiece by Mr. Hogarth."

* Sotheby's Catalogue of a Sale, December 2, 1910—item 221.

This, the second edition, contained the dedication to Pitt, it being the author's desire, as imparted to John Croft, that "it might lay in his parlour window, and amuse him after the fatigues of business as a lounging book." A more valuable feature was a frontispiece by Hogarth, which was obtained through the kind offices of Richard Beringer, subsequently Gentleman of the House to George III., the friend of Johnson and Garrick, and himself an author.

Laurence Sterne to Richard Beringer

March 1760.

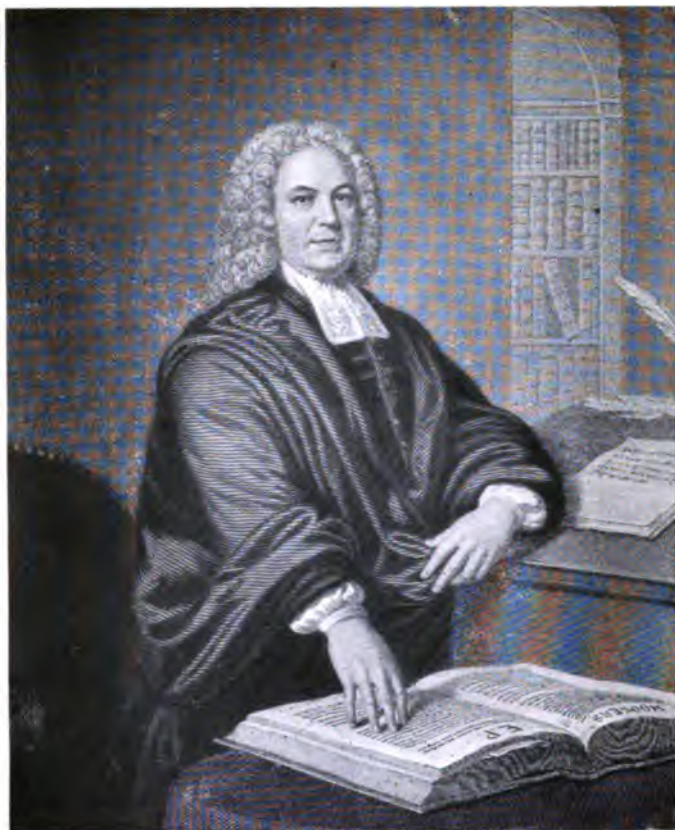
You bid me tell you all my wants. What the Devil in Hell can a fellow want now? By the Father of the Sciences (you know his name) I would give both my ears (if I was not to lose my credit by it) for no more than ten strokes of Hogarth's witty chisel, to clap at the Front of my next Edition of "Shandy." The Vanity of a Pretty Girl in the Heyday of her Roses and Lilies is a fool to that of an Author of my stamp. Oft did Swift sigh to Pope in these words: "*Orna me*, unite something of yours to mine, to transmit us down together hand in hand to futurity." The loosest sketch in Nature, of Trim's reading the sermon to my Father, etc., w^d do the Business, and it w^d mutually illustrate his System and mine. But, my dear Shandy, with what face I would hold out my lank Purse! I would shut my eyes, and you should put in your hand, and take out what you liked for it. Ignoramus! Fool! Block-

head ! Symoniack ! This Grace is not to be bought with money. Perish thee and thy Gold with thee ! What shall we do ? I have the worst face in the world to ask a favour with, and besides, I would not propose a disagreeable thing to one I so much admire for the whole world ; but you can say anything—you are an impudent honest Dog, and can'st set a face upon a bad matter ; prithee sally out to Leicester fields, and when you have knocked at the door (for you must knock first) and art got in, begin thus : “ Mr. Hogarth, I have been with my friend Shandy this morning ” ; but go on y^r own way, as I shall do mine. I esteem you, and am, my dear Mentor, Y^r most Shandiascally,

L. STERNE.*

The immediate success of “ Tristram Shandy ” is one of the most dramatic events in the annals of English literature. The author was entirely unknown beyond the confines of the cathedral city near which he lived, there was no special circumstance to introduce it to the public, its advent was heralded only by one or two advertisements in the *Publick Advertiser*, only a small parcel of copies was sent to the London bookseller, who had little interest to induce him to push the sale of it ; finally, it is easy to agree with Hall-Stevenson that of those who read it but few can have understood it. Sterne had

* *Sterne at Home* (Cornhill Magazine, November 1892). Reprinted by permission of Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co.



WILLIAM WARBURTON, BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER.

(See p. 232.)

From an engraving by H. Adland after a portrait by Hoare.

not even private friends in London to recommend it, though, of course, some of his Yorkshire intimates may have mentioned the book in letters to acquaintances in town. We know, however, that the attention of David Garrick was directed to it by Mlle de Fourmantelle, who knew him slightly—presumably she had met him in the course of her professional career. It has since become known that Mlle de Fourmantelle's letter to Garrick was written by Sterne—the original in his handwriting is in the possession of Mr. John Murray—and copied by the lady : with this knowledge it is difficult to read the apparently ingenuous epistle without a smile.

YORK, *Jan'y.* 1 [1760].

SR,

I dare say you will wonder to receive an Epistle from me, and the subject of it will surprise you still more, because it is to tell you something about Books.

There are two Volumes just published here, which have made a great noise, and have had a prodigious run ; for, in two days after they came out, the Bookseller sold two hundred, and continues selling them very fast. It is the " Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy," which the Author told me last night at our Concert he had sent up to London, so perhaps you have seen it ; If you have not seen it, pray get it and read it, because it has a great character as a witty smart Book, and if you think so, your good

word in Town will do the Author, I am sure, great service. You must understand he is a kind and generous friend of mine, whom Providence has attach'd to me in this part of the World, where I came a stranger—and I could not think how I could make a better return, than by endeavouring to make you a Friend to him and his performance; this is all my excuse for this liberty, which I hope you will excuse. His name is Sterne, a gentleman of great Preferment, and a Prebendary of the Church of York, and has a great character, in these parts, as a man of Learning and Wit; the graver people, however, say 'tis not fit for young Ladies to read his Book, so perhaps you'll think it not fit for a young Lady to recommend it; however the Nobility and Great Folks stand up mightily for it, and say 'tis a good Book, tho' a little tawdry in some places.

I am, dear Sir, y^r most obd^t and humble servant.

This was soon followed by a letter to Garrick written by Sterne in his own person.

YORK, *Jany*, 27, 1760.

SIR,

I had a strong propensity when I did myself the pleasure of sending you the two vols. to have accompanied them with a letter to you:—I took up my pen twice—hang it:—I shall write a vile insinuating letter, the English of which will be—to beg Mr. Garrick's good word for my Book, whether the book deserves it or no—I will not—the book shall go to the Devil

first. But being told yesterday by Dr. Goddard, that you had actually spoke well of my book, that scruple is got over, and I feel myself at liberty to attend to the movements of gratitude (and perhaps of vanity) to return you my thanks, sir, which I heartily do for the great service and honour your good word has done me. I know not what it was (although I lye abominably, because I know very well) which inclined me more to wish for your approbation, than any other's—but my first impulse was to send it to you, to have had your critique upon it, before it went to the press—it fell out otherwise, and has therefore gone forth into the world, hot as it came from my brain, without one correction :—'tis however a picture of myself, and so far may bid the fairer for being an original. I sometimes think of a Cervantic Comedy upon these and the materials of the 8rd and 4th vols. which will be still more dramatic—tho' I as often distrust its success unless at the Universities.

Half a word of encouragement would be enough to make me conceive and bring forth something for the stage (how good, and how bad, is another story).

I am, Sir,

With the most sincere esteem for your great Talents,

Your most obliged and humble servant,

LAURENCE STERNE.*

In spite of all the drawbacks, or perhaps it

* This letter appeared in *The Archivist* (September 1894), to which it was sent by the owner, Mr. F. Barker.

would be more correct to say in spite of the lack of advantages, that attended its first appearance, "Tristram Shandy" was soon the book of the day. So popular was it that almost at once a salad, a horse-race, and a game of cards (in which the knave of hearts was trumps and carried all before it) were named from the novel. If anything was still wanting to fan the flame of its success, this was soon supplied by the numerous parodies and imitations that came in hot haste from the metropolitan press. The first of these was "The Clockmaker's Outcry against the Author of Tristram Shandy," and Sterne was delighted by the compliment. "There is a shilling pamphlet wrote against Tristram," he said in reference to this when writing to Stephen Croft; "I wish they would write a hundred such." Soon it looked as if the author's wish would be gratified. In quick succession appeared "Explanatory Remarks upon the 'Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy'; wherein the Morals and Politics of this Piece are clearly laid open, by Jeremiah Kunastrokius, D.D.," and "The Life and Opinions of Miss Sukey Shandy of Bow Street, Gentlewoman"; *The London Magazine* acknowledges among books received, in June 1760, "Tristram Shandy at Ranelagh"; in August, "Yorick's Meditations" and "Tristram Shandy in Reverie," and in December "A Supplement to the 'Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gent.,' Serving to

elucidate that Work. By the Author of 'Yorick's Meditations.' "

There was a scribbler sufficiently audacious to write, and a publisher unscrupulous enough to issue in September, an imitation under the title of "Tristram Shandy, Vol. III.," which, appearing shortly before Sterne's third volume, was for a while mistaken for the genuine article, and as such dealt with in *The Critical Review*. "Tristram Shandy is at length born," so runs the notice in the December issue of that periodical; "but so unequal to the hopes conceived of him in the womb, that we apprehend the public will cry out upon him as an abortion, or perhaps a spurious brat, palmed upon the fond parent for his own legitimate offspring. To speak without a figure, we never perused a more stupid, unmeaning, and senseless performance." The publication of this and other spurious works attracted so much attention as to make it necessary to announce, in his advertisements of the third and fourth volumes of "Tristram Shandy," that they were by the author of the first and second volumes.

One circumstance there was in Sterne's favour, and, though this has been rarely if ever mentioned, it must not be passed over lightly. "Tristram Shandy" appeared at a time when no great novelist was writing, In 1751 "Amelia" and "Peregrine Pickle" were published, and in 1758 "Sir Charles Grandison";

but during the next six years the only work of importance in this department of literature was "Rasselas." Fielding was dead; Richardson was still alive, it is true, but he was in his seventy-first year and his literary work was over; Smollett, too, was alive—indeed, he outlived Sterne, but after 1758 he did not publish another novel, until 1771, in which year appeared "Humphrey Clinker." The field, then, was clear for a humoristical writer, and, as usual, the hour produced the man. Sterne must have secured fame whenever his book appeared, but there can be no doubt that by publishing at a time when there was no rival author his genius was recognised more easily and more speedily. This astonishing good fortune endured through the remaining eight years of his life, for between the appearance of the first instalment of "Tristram Shandy" and the publication of "A Sentimental Journey," the only notable works in this branch of light literature were, in 1764, "The Castle of Otranto," and, two years later, "The Vicar of Wakefield" and "The Fool of Quality." And here again Sterne's luck stood him in good stead, for Goldsmith did not follow up his success with other novels, but turned his attention to the stage.

To whatever causes, apart from the merits of the work, the immediate success of "Tristram Shandy" was due, it was certainly not owing to the appreciation of the leading men of letters

of the day, for almost all of these, so far from giving it countenance, did their best to damn it. Gray, it is true, thought that in the first two volumes there was “much good fun, and humour sometimes hit and sometimes missed” * : but this is the only recorded tribute from any of the notabilities. Perhaps of the rest Johnson was the least unfavourable, though when one day he was asserting that in literature “nothing odd will do long,” he supported this contention by adding that “Tristram Shandy” did not last long †—a delightful example of myopic criticism. Horace Walpole thought the work “a very insipid and tedious performance.”

It is a kind of novel [he wrote to Sir David Dalrymple from Strawberry Hill, on April 4, 1760], the great humour of which consists in the whole narration always going backwards. I can conceive a man saying it would be droll to write a book in that manner, but have no notion of his persevering in executing it. It makes one smile two or three times at the beginning, but in recompense makes one yawn for two hours. The characters are tolerably kept up, but the humour is for ever attempted and missed. The best thing in it is a sermon, oddly coupled with a great deal of bawdy, and both the composition of a clergyman.

* *Letters* (ed. Gosse), Vol. III. p. 53.

† Boswell : *Johnson* (ed. Birkbeck Hill), Vol. II. p. 449.

Even Oliver Goldsmith attacked "Tristram Shandy," which is surprising, for the creator of Beau Tibbs might have been expected to enjoy the wayward fancy that conjured up My Uncle Toby and the other members of the Shandy family. The attack by the author of "The Vicar of Wakefield" is so violent as to produce the same stupefying effect as has the first reading of the scarifying verses of Charles Lamb upon those who before only knew the author as "Gentle Elia." Goldsmith made his assault in *The Public Ledger* in one of his "Citizen of the World" papers, entitled, "The Absurd Taste for Obscene and Pert Novels, such as 'Tristram Shandy,' ridiculed."

A bawdy blockhead often passes for a fellow of smart parts and pretensions. Every object in nature helps the jokes forward, without scarce any effort of the imagination. If a lady stands, something very good may be said upon that; if she happens to fall, with the help of a little fashionable pruriency, there are forty sly things ready on the occasion. But a prurient jest has always been found to give most pleasure to a few very old gentlemen, who, being in some measure dead to other sensations, feel the force of allusion with double violence on the organs of risibility.

An author who writes in this manner is generally sure, therefore, of having the very old and the impotent among his admirers; for these he may properly be said to write, and from these

he ought to expect his reward ; his works being often a very proper succedaneum to cantharides, or an asafœtida pill. His pen should be considered in the same light as the squirt of an apothecary, both being directed at the same generous end. . . . There are several very dull fellows who, by a few mechanical helps, sometimes learn to become extremely brilliant and pleasing ; with a little dexterity in the management of the eyebrows, fingers, and nose. By imitating a cat, a sow and pigs, by a loud laugh and a slap on the shoulder, the most ignorant are furnished out for conversation. But the writer finds it impossible to throw his winks, his shrugs, or his attitudes upon paper ; he may borrow some assistance, indeed, by printing his face at the title-page ; but without wit, to pass for a man of ingenuity, no other mechanical help but downright obscenity will suffice. By speaking to some peculiar sensations, we are always sure of exciting laughter, for the jest does not lie in the writer, but in the subject.

Contemporary criticism of a masterpiece is almost always interesting as well as instructive to later generations, and no apology is needed for giving one or two specimens. The reviewers, as a whole, were at first kind, though not vastly enthusiastic, and a writer in *The Critical Review* for January 1760 seems to have summed up the prevailing opinion :

This is a humorous performance, of which

we are unable to convey any distinct ideas to our readers. The whole is composed of digressions, divertingly enough introduced, and characters which we think well supported. For instance, Uncle Toby, Corporal Trim, and Dr. Slop are excellent imitations of certain characters . . . a truly Cervantic performance.

The reading public was divided into Shandyites and anti-Shandyites, the former, however, the smaller, if not, perhaps, the less distinguished body. "More than half of the three kingdoms were convulsed with laughter at Sterne's humour," says Isaac Disraeli, "the other part were obdurately dull to it." "All read, most aproved, but few understood them," Hall-Stevenson subsequently wrote of the first two volumes. "Those who had not entered into the ludicrous manner of Rabelais, or the poignant satire of Swift, did not comprehend them; but they joined with the multitude, and pronounced 'Tristram Shandy' d——d clever." "A few who pretended to judge for themselves were staggered at the asterisks, and disappointed with the digressions." Mrs. Delany, as well as another, may be taken as the spokesman for the prosecution.

The Dean [she wrote to Mrs. Dewes, from Delville, April 24, 1760] is indeed very angry with the author of *Tristram*, etc., and those who do not condemn the work as it deserves; it *has not* and *will not* enter this house, especially

now your account is added to a very bad one we had heard before. We were upon the brink of having it read among us: Mr. Sandford heard Faulkner, the printer, cry it up so much, and say it had had a great run in England, and he would have brought it had we not been engaged in another book, and no one would have been more distressed at reading it than himself.*

For the defence it is unnecessary to call witnesses, but we cannot refrain from quoting the testimony of the Rev. Philip Skelton, a distinguished Irish divine, that “Tristram Shandy” filled him with so many ludicrous ideas that, after reading it, he could not for two or three days attend seriously to his devotions. But Sterne, though always appreciative of admiration, was by no means dependent upon it. “An author is not so soon humbled as you imagine,” Sterne wrote in reply to one of his amateur critics, who called him over the coals in a letter; and he bore the attacks of the reviewers and the literary quidnuncs with an amused tolerance. He was perfectly sure of his genius, and though he may have had, nay, like every author of talent, did have, bad moments of doubt during composition, yet when he put the sheets from him once for all, he was perfectly satisfied that he had done well. Confident in the belief that he had written a masterpiece, he

* *Autobiography and Letters*, Vol. III. p. 589.

turned round on his critics and laughed at them in all good humour. "Thrice happy book!" he exclaimed, when he left a blank page in one of the chapters. "Thrice happy book! thou wilt have one page at least within thy covers, which MALICE will not blacken, and which ignorance cannot misrepresent." * "O Trim!" he cried elsewhere, "would to Heaven Thou had'st a better historian!—would!—thy historian had a better pair of breeches!—O ye critics! will nothing melt you?" † "The scribblers use me ill," he wrote to Warburton, while he was writing the third volume of "Tristram Shandy," "but they have used my betters much worse, for which may God forgive them." Once he took the scribblers to task at greater length,—though still with great good humour.

Let us just look back upon the country we have passed through.—What a wilderness has it been! and what a mercy that we have not both of us been lost or devoured by wild beasts in it!

Did you think the world itself, Sir, had contained such a number of Jack Asses?—How they viewed and reviewed us as we passed over the rivulet at the bottom of that little valley!—and when we climbed over that hill, and were just getting out of sight—good God! what a braying did they all set up together!

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. VI. ch. xxxviii.

† *Ibid.*, Vol. V. p. vii.

Prithee, shepherd ! who keeps all those Jack Asses ? * * *

—Heaven be their comforter !—What ! are they never curried ?—Are they never taken-in in winter ?—Bray, bray—bray. Bray on,—the world is deeply your debtor ;—louder still—that's nothing ;—in good sooth, you are ill-used :—Was I a Jack Ass, I solemnly declare, I would bray in G-sol-re-ut from morning, even unto night.*

There were annoyances in store for Sterne from other than professional critics. It has been said in an earlier chapter that Dr. Slop was a caricature of Dr. Burton. This, however, Dr. Burton was too proud or too indifferent to resent ; but several other persons, it is amusing to relate, saw themselves in this character. One of these gentlemen called on Sterne, and happily a record of the quaint interview has been preserved.

"Are you a man-midwife ?" asked the novelist, when his visitor had made clear the object of his visit.

"No," the other admitted.

"Or a Catholic ?"

Again the answer was in the negative.

"Were you ever thrown from your horse into the mud ?"

"Yes," came the reply eagerly.

"Sir, I have not hurt you," said Sterne.

"But take care ! I am not born yet, and you

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. VI. ch. i.

cannot know what I may say in the next two volumes."

Sterne, too, had to defend himself against the charge of having maligned, by introducing him as Dr. Kunastrokius in "Tristram Shandy," the distinguished physician, Richard Mead,* who numbered Pope among his patients—a fact duly recorded in the "Epistle to Bolingbroke":

"I'll do what Mead and Cheselden advise."

De mortuis nil nisi bonum, is a maxim which you have so often of late urged in conversation, and in your letters (but in your last especially), with such seriousness, and severity against me, as the supposed transgressor of the rule;—that you have made me at length as serious and severe as yourself:—but that the humours you have stirred up might not work too potently within me, I have waited four days to cool myself, before I would set pen to paper to answer you, "*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*."

I declare I have considered the wisdom and foundation of it over and over again, as dispassionately and charitably as a good Christian can, and, after all, I can find nothing in it, or make more of it, than a nonsensical lullaby of some nurse, put into Latin by some pedant, to be chanted by some hypocrite to the end of the world, for the consolation of departing lechers.—'Tis, I own, Latin; and I think that is all the weight it has—for, in plain English, 'tis a loose and futile position below a dispute—

* Dr. Mead, who was born in 1673, died in 1754.

“*you are not to speak any thing of the dead, but what is good.*” Why so?—Who says so?—neither reason nor scripture.—Inspired authors have done otherwise—and reason and common sense tell me, that if the characters of past ages and men are to be drawn at all, they are to be drawn like themselves; that is, with their excellencies, and with their foibles—and it is as much a piece of justice to the world, and to virtue too, to do the one, as the other.—The ruling passion, *et les égarements du cœur*, are the very things which mark and distinguish a man’s character;—in which I would as soon leave out a man’s head as his hobby-horse.—However, if like the poor devil of a painter, we must conform to this pious canon, *de mortuis, etc.*, which I own has a spice of piety in the *sound* of it, and be obliged to paint both our angels and our devils out of the same pot—I then infer that our Sydenhams, and Sangrados, our Lucretias, and Messalinas, our Sommers, and our Bolingbrokes—are alike entitled to statues, and all the historians or satirists who have said otherwise since they departed this life, from Sallust to S—e, are guilty of the crimes you charge me with, “cowardice and injustice.”

But why cowardice? “because ’tis not courage to attack a dead man who can’t defend himself.” But why do you doctors of the faculty attack such a one with your incision knife?—“Oh! for the good of the living.”—’Tis my plea.—But I have something more to say in my behalf—and it is this—I am not guilty of the charge—tho’ defensible. I have not cut

up Doctor Kunastrokius at all—I have just scratch'd him—and that scarce skin deep—I do him first all honour—speak of Kunastrokius as a great man—(be he whom he will) and then most distantly hint at a droll foible in his character—and that not first reported (to the few who can even understand the hint) by me—but known before by every chamber-maid and footman within the bills of mortality—But Kunastrokius, you say, was a great man—'tis that very circumstance which makes the pleasantry—for I could name at this instant a score of honest gentlemen who might have done the very thing which Kunastrokius did, and seen no joke in it at all—as to the failing of Kunastrokius, which you say can only be imputed to his friends as a misfortune—I see nothing like a misfortune in it to any friend or relation of Kunastrokius—that Kunastrokius upon occasions should sit with ***** and *****—I have put these stars not *to hurt your worship's delicacy*—If Kunastrokius after all is too sacred a character to be even smiled at (which is all I have done), he has had better luck than his betters : In the same page (without imputation of cowardice) I have said as much of a man of twice his wisdom—and that is Solomon, of whom I have made the same remark, “That they were both great men—and like all mortal men had each their ruling passion.” *

These, however, were by no means the only troubles that arose out of the publication of

* Letter to Dr. *****, January 30, 1760.



LAURENCE STERNE.

(See p. 246.)

From an engraving by I. K. Sherwin after a portrait by Reynolds.

"Tristram Shandy." In the first place, Hall-Stevenson, inspired by friendship, published two Epistles "To my Cousin Shandy, on his coming to Town," which, by their impropriety, more than defeated the kindly intention of the author. The second trouble was an article in *The Royal Female Magazine* for April (1760), which attracted much attention, and was copied by the newspapers, on the assumption that Sterne was the author.

The letter in *The Ladies' Magazine*, about me, was wrote by the noted Dr. Hill, who wrote "The Inspector," and undertakes that magazine, [Sterne wrote to Stephen Croft in May, 1760]. The people of York are very uncharitable to suppose any man so gross a beast as to pen such a character of himself.—In this great town no soul ever suspected it, for a thousand reasons—could they suppose I should be such a fool as to fall foul upon Dr. Warburton, my best friend, by representing him so weak a man—or by telling such a lie of him, as his giving me a purse, to buy off his tutorship for Tristram! or I should be fool enough to own I had taken his purse for that purpose!

The absurd story that Sterne had blackmailed Dr. Warburton had already gone the round of the town, and had greatly annoyed the author, who was then unacquainted with the Bishop. In a letter, dated March 6, 1670, to Garrick ex-

pressing his indignation, he asked to be introduced to the Bishop.

'Twas for all the world like a cut across my finger with a sharp penknife. I saw the blood—gave it a suck—wrapt it up—and thought no more about it. But there is more goes to the healing of a wound than this comes to:—a wound (unless it is a wound not worth talking of, but by the bye mine is) must give you some pain after.—Nature will take her own way with it—it must ferment—it must digest.

The story you told me of Tristram's pretended tutor, this morning.—My letter by right should have set out with this sentence, and then the simile would not have kept you a moment in suspense.

This vile story, I say—though I then saw both how, and where it wounded—I felt little from it at first—or, to speak more honestly (though it ruins my simile), I felt a great deal of pain from it, but affected an air usual on such accidents, of less feeling than I had.

I have now got home to my lodgings, since the play (you astonished me in it), and have been unwrapping this self-same wound of mine, and shaking my head over it this half-hour.

What the devil!—is there no one learned blockhead throughout the many schools of misapplied science in the Christian World, to make a *tutor* of for my Tristram? *Ex quovis ligno non fit*—Are we so run out of stock, that there is no one lumber-headed, muddle-headed, mortar-headed, pudding-headed *chap* amongst our

doctors ? Is there no one single wight of much reading and no learning amongst the many children in my *mother's* nursery, who bid high for this charge—but I must disable my judgment by chusing a Warburton ? Vengeance ! have I so little concern for the honour of my hero !—Am I a wretch so void of sense, so bereft of feeling for the figure he is to make in story, that I should chuse a præceptor to rob him of all the immortality I intended him ? O ! dear Mr. Garrick.

Malice is ingenious—unless where the excess of it outwits itself—I have two comforts in this stroke of it ;—the first is, that this one is partly of this kind ; and secondly, that it is one of the number of those which so unfairly brought poor Yorick to his grave.—The report might draw blood of the author of “Tristram Shandy”—but could not harm such a man as the author of “The Divine Legation”—God bless him ! though (by the bye, and according to the natural course of descents) the blessing should come from him to me.

Pray have you no interest, lateral or collateral, to get me introduced to his Lordship ?

“Why do ye ask ?”

My dear Sir, I have no claim to such an honour, but what arises from the honour and respect which, in the progress of my work, will be shewn the world I owe to so great a man.

Whilst I am talking of owing—I wish, my dear Sir, that any body would tell you, how much I am indebted to you.—I am determined

never to do it myself, or say more upon the subject than this, that I am yours,

L. STERNE.

Garrick introduced the men, and the author had for a while no more ardent admirer than the truculent prelate. At the first meeting, Warburton presented Sterne with a purse of gold, and complimented him by saying of "Tristram Shandy," "that it was quite an original composition, and in the true Cervantic vein." Subsequently Warburton recommended the book to the bench of bishops, and told them Mr Sterne, the author, was the English Rabelais: Walpole, who tells the story, adds drily: "They had never heard of such an author." Sterne, who was delighted by this kind reception, in June sent the Bishop two sets of his Sermons, which were acknowledged in a letter containing advice that irritated the recipient. The letters may be left to speak for themselves.

Laurence Sterne to Bishop Warburton

YORK, June 9, 1760.

MY LORD,

Not knowing where to send to sets of my Sermons, I could think of no better expedient, than to order them into Mr. Berrenger's hands, who has promised me that he will wait upon your Lordship with them, the first moment he hears you are in town. The truest and

humblest thanks I return to your Lordship, for the generosity of your protection, and advice to me; by making a good use of the one, I will hope to deserve the other; I wish your Lordship all the health and happiness in this world, for I am

Your Lordship's

Most obliged and most grateful servant

L. STERNE.

P.S. I am just sitting down to go on with “ Tristram,” etc.—The scribblers use me ill, but they have used my betters worse, for which may God forgive them.

Bishop Warburton to Laurence Sterne

PRIOR-PARK,

June 15, 1760.

REVEREND SIR,

I have your favour of the 9th instant, and am glad to understand, you are got safe home, and employed again in your proper studies and amusements. You have it in your power to make that, which is an amusement to yourself and others, useful to both: at least, you should above all things, beware of its becoming hurtful to either, by any violations of decency and good manners; but I have already taken such repeated liberties of advising you on that head, that to say more would be needless, or perhaps unacceptable.

Whoever is, in any way, well received by the public, is sure to be annoyed by that pest of the public, *profligate scribblers*. This is the

common lot of successful adventurers ;—but such have often a worse evil to struggle with, I mean the over-officiousness of their indiscreet friends. There are two Odes,* as they are called, printed by Dodsley. Whoever was the author, he appears to be a monster of impiety and lewdness—yet, such is the malignity of the scribblers, some have given them to your friend Hall ;—and others, which is still more impossible, to yourself ; though the first Ode has the insolence to place you both in a mean and a ridiculous light. But this might arise from a tale equally groundless and malignant, that you had shewn them to your acquaintances in MS. before they were given to the public. Nor was their being printed by Dodsley the likeliest means of discrediting the calumny.

About this time, another, under the mask of friendship, pretended to draw your character, which was since published in a *Female Magazine* (for dulness, who often has as great a hand as the devil, in deforming God's works of the creation, has *made them*, it seems, *male* and *female*), and from thence it was transferred into a *Chronicle*. Pray have you read it, or do you know its author ?

But of all these things, I dare say Mr. Garrick, whose prudence is equal to his honesty or his talents, has remonstrated to you with the freedom of a friend. He knows the inconstancy of what is called the Public, towards all, even the best intentioned, of those who contribute to its pleasure or amusement. He (as every man of

* Hall-Stevenson's *Two Lyric Epistles*.

honour and discretion would) has availed himself of the public favour, to regulate the taste, and, in his proper station, to reform the manners of the fashionable world ;—while, by a well-judged œconomy, he has provided against the temptations of a mean and servile dependency on the follies and vices of the great.

In a word, be assured, there is no one more sincerely wishes your welfare and happiness, than,

Reverend Sir,

W. G.

Laurence Sterne to Bishop Warburton

COXWOLD,
June 19, 1760.

MY LORD,

The post brought me the honour of your letter, for which, and for your kind and most friendly advice, I return your Lordship all I am able—my best thanks. Be assured, my lord, that willingly and knowingly I will give no offence to any mortal by anything which I think can look like the least violation either of decency or good manners ; and yet, with all the caution of a heart void of offence or intention of giving it, I may find it very hard, in writing such a book as “Tristram Shandy,” to mutilate anything in it down to the prudish humour of every particular. I will, however, do my best—though laugh, my Lord, I will, and as loud as I can too.

With regard to the Lyrick Odes, all I know of them is this ; that the first Ode, which places

me and the author in a ridiculous light, was sent to me in a cover without a name, which, after striking out some parts, as a whimsical performance, I showed to some acquaintance; and as Mr. Garrick had told me some time before he would write me an Ode, for a day or two I supposed it came from him. I found afterwards it was sent me from Mr. Hall; for from a nineteen years' total interruption of all correspondence with him, I had forgot his hand, which at last, when I recollected, I sent it back. The second Ode, which abounds with indecencies, is, I suppose, his too; as they are published together, there can be little doubt. He must answer for them; having nothing myself to answer for with regard to them but my extreme concern, and that a man of such great talents as my acquaintance Mr. Hall is, should give the world so much offence. He has it greatly in his power to make amends; and, if I have any penetration, and can depend upon the many assurances he gives me, your Lordship will, I hope, live to see it. He is worth reclaiming, being one of those whom nature has enabled to do much hurt or much good.

Of all the vile things wrote against me, the letter your Lordship mentions in *The Female Magazine* is the most inimicitious, and gave, for that reason, the most concern; under which I had no better relief than denying the facts, and crying out against the hardship done me by such a contexture of lies tacked together, not to serve me but to overthrow me. Such profligate wretches too often gain their end. Every mortal

in town says it was wrote by a Dr. Hill, who wrote “The Inspectors,” and, they tell me, has the property and management of that Magazine. Garrick tells me the same story, and with reasons to confirm it. These strokes in the dark, with the many kicks, cuffs, and bastinadoes I openly get on all sides of me, are beginning to make me sick of this foolish humour of mine, of sallying forth into this wide and wicked world to redress wrongs, etc., of which I shall repent as sorely as ever Sancho Panza did of his in following his evil genius of a Don Quixote through thick and thin; but as the poor fellow apologised for it, so must I: “it was my ill fortune and my errantry, and that’s all that can be said on’t.” Otherwise, I wish from my heart I had never set pen to paper, but continued hid in the quiet obscurity in which I had so long lived. I was quiet, for I was below envy and yet above want; and indeed so very far above it, that the idea of it never once entered my head in writing; and as I am £200 a year farther from the danger of it than I was then, I think it never will; for I declare I have all I wish or want in this world, being in my calculation of money, all out, as rich as my friend Garrick, whose goodness of heart and honest cowardice in keeping *so far* out of the way of temptation, I nevertheless esteem and admire.

The Bishop of Carlisle did me the honour yesterday of a call; of whom I had the satisfaction of inquiring after your Lordship’s health, and particularly how far the waters had relieved you under the pain and indigestion you

complained of. He hoped your Lordship was better.

I wish your Lordship all the most grateful man can wish—happiness in this world and in the next.

I am, my Lord,

With all esteem and duty,

Your affectionate servant,

LAU. STERNE.

Bishop Warburton to Laurence Sterne

P[BIOB] P[ARK]

June 26, 1760.

REV. SIR,

I have the favour of your obliging Letter of the 19th. It gives me real pleasure (and I could not but trouble you with these two or three lines to tell you so) that you are resolved to do justice to your genius, and to borrow no aids to support it, but what are of the party of honour, virtue, and religion.

You say you will continue to laugh aloud. In good time. But one who was no more than even a man of spirit would wish to laugh in good company; where priests and virgins may be present. . . .

Do not expect your friends to pity you for the trash and ribaldry scribbled against you; they will be apter to congratulate you upon it.

Notwithstanding all your wishes for your former obscurity, which your present chagrin excites, yet a wise man cannot but choose the sunshine before the shade; indeed he would not wish to dwell in the malignant heat of the dog-days, not for the teasing and momentary

annoyance of the numberless tribes of insects abroad at that time, but for the more fatal aspect of the superior bodies.

I would recommend a maxim to you which Bishop Sherlock formerly told me Dr. Bentley recommended to him, that a man was never writ out of the reputation he had once fairly won, but by himself.

I am, etc.,
W. G.

It may be surmised that the manly independence of Sterne's reply, notably the “Laugh, my Lord, I will, and as loud as I can too!” did not altogether please the Bishop of Gloucester. What may have happened in the meantime it is impossible to say, but Warburton, writing to Hurd, December 27, 1761, shows that his opinion had changed entirely. “Sterne has published his fifth and sixth volumes of ‘Tristram’; whether they will restore his reputation with the public is a question,” he remarked. “The fellow himself is an irrevocable scoundrel.” However, little stress need be laid on this, for Warburton was given unduly to the use of strong language on the slightest provocation.*

* “Warburton afterwards quarrelled with Sterne, and called him an ‘irrevocable scoundrel,’ as he called Smollett ‘a vagabond Scot who wrote nonsense’; Voltaire, ‘a scoundrel and a liar’; Akenside, ‘a wretch,’ and Priestley, ‘a wretched fellow’; as he said that he ‘never knew a wicked heart than Hume’s, or one more disposed to do mischief’; as he told the House of Lords that ‘all the devils in hell were ready to welcome Wilkes.’”
—Adams Sherman Hill (*North American Review*, July 1868).

The charge that Sterne found it hardest to bear was that his book was "incompatible with that purity and morality which should accompany the writings of the gentlemen of the gown," as one of his assailants phrased it. Though, at first blush, it is apparently an audacious theory to put forward, there are good grounds for contending that Sterne never regarded himself as even being improper. He let his daughter copy his manuscript, and he read the chapters as they were written to his wife; and when the accusation was made to him direct, he treated his candid friend with less of the tolerant good-nature than is usually displayed in his letters.

The consolation you give me, "That my book, however, will be read enough to answer my design of raising a tax upon the public"—is, very unconsolatory—to say nothing how very mortifying! (he wrote to that same Dr. *****). By h——n! an author is worse treated than a common ***** at this rate—"You will get a penny by your sins, and that's enough."—Upon this chapter let me comment.—That I proposed laying the world under contribution when I set pen to paper—is what I own, and I suppose I may be allow'd to have that view in my head in common with every other writer, to make my labour of advantage to myself.

Do you not do the same? but I beg I may add, that whatever views I had of that kind, I had other views—the first of which was, the hopes of doing the world good, by ridiculing

what I thought deserving of it—or of disservice to sound learning, etc.,—how I have succeeded, my book must shew—and this I leave entirely to the world—but not to that little world of *your acquaintance*, whose opinion and sentiments you call the general opinion of the best judges *without exception*, who all affirm (you say) that my book cannot be put into the hands of any woman of *character*. (I hope you except widows, doctors,—for they are not all *so* squeamish, but I am told they are all really of my party, in return for some good offices done their interests in the 274th page of my first volume.) But for the chaste married, and chaste unmarried part of the sex—they must not read my book! Heaven forbid the stock of chastity should be lessened by the “Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy”—yes, his Opinions—it would certainly debauch ’em. God take them under His protection in this fiery trial, and send us plenty of Duennas to watch the workings of their humours, till they have safely got through the whole work.—If this will not be sufficient, may we have plenty of Sangrados to pour in plenty of cold water, till this terrible fermentation is over—as for the *nummum in loculo*, which you mention to me a second time, I fear you think me very poor, or in debt—I thank God, though I don’t abound—that I have enough for a clean shirt every day—and a mutton chop—and my contentment, with this, has thus far (and I hope ever will) put me above stooping an inch for it, even for ——’s estate.—Curse on it, I like it not to that degree, nor envy (*you may*

be sure) any man who kneels in the dirt for it—so that howsoever I may fall short of the ends proposed in commencing author—I enter this *protest*, first, that my end was *honest*, and, secondly, that I wrote not to be *fed*, but to be *famous*. I am much obliged to Mr. Garrick for his very favourable opinion—but why, dear Sir, had he done better in finding fault with it than in commending it? to humble me! an author is not so soon humbled as you imagine—no, but to make the book better by castrations—that is still *sub judice*, and I can assure you upon this chapter, that the very passages and descriptions you propose that I should sacrifice in my second edition, are what are best relished by men of wit, and some others whom I esteem as sound critics—so that, upon the whole, I am still kept up, if not above fear, at least above despair, and have seen enough to shew me the folly of an attempt of castrating my book to the prudish humours of particulars. I believe the short cut would be to publish this letter at the beginning of the third volume, as an apology for the first and second. I was sorry to find a censure upon the insincerity of some of my friends—I have no reason myself to reproach any one man—my friends have continued in the same opinions of my books which they first gave me of them—many indeed have thought better of 'em, by considering them more; few worse.

This matter of propriety is of moment in so far as it has coloured almost all criticism, and

therefore it is worth while to quote another defence from the author's pen in answer to a letter from a friend, who, to judge from the more gentle and humorous tone of the reply, must have approached the subject more tactfully than Dr. *****.

I have received your kind letter of critical, and, I will add, of parental advice, which, contrary to my natural humour, set me upon looking gravely for half a day together: sometimes I concluded you had not spoke out, but had stronger grounds for your hints and cautions than what your good-nature knew how to tell me, especially with regard to prudence, as a divine; and that you thought in your heart the vein of humour too free for the solemn colour of my coat. A meditation upon Death had been a more suitable trimming to it, I own; but then it could not have been set on by me. Mr. Fothergil, whom I regard in the class I do you, as my best of critics and well-wishers, preaches daily to me on the same text: “Get your preferment first, Lory,” he says, “and then write and welcome.” But suppose preferment is long a-coming—and, for aught I know, I may not be preferr'd till the Resurrection of the Just—and am all that time in labour, who must I bear my pains? You both frighten me with after-pains, like pious divines, or rather like able Philosophers, knowing that one passion is only to be combatted with another. But to be serious if I can, I will use all reasonable caution,—only with this caution along with it, not to

spoil my book—that is, the air and originality of it, which must resemble the author—and I fear it is the number of these slighter touches, which make the resemblance, and identify it from all others of the same stamp, which this under-strapping virtue of prudence would oblige me to strike out.—A very able critic, and one of my colour too, who has read over “Tristram,” made answer, upon my saying I would consider the colour of my coat as I corrected it, that that idea in my head would render my book not worth a groat.—Still I promise to be cautious; but deny I have gone as far as Swift: he keeps a due distance from Rabelais; I keep a due distance from him. Swift has said a hundred things I durst not say, unless I was Dean of St. Patrick’s.

I like your caution, *ambitiosa recides ornamenta*. As I revise my book, I will shrive my conscience upon that sin, and whatever ornaments are of that kind shall be defaced without mercy. Ovid is justly censured for being *ingenii sui amator*; and it is a reasonable hint to me, as I’m not sure I am clear of it. To sport too much with your wit, or the game that wit has pointed out, is surfeiting; like toying with a man’s mistress, it may be very delightful solacement to the innamorato, but little to the bystander. Though I plead guilty to part of the charge, yet it would greatly alleviate the crime, if my readers knew how much I have suppressed of this device. I have burnt more wit than I have published, on that very account; since I began to avoid the fault, I fear,

I may yet have given proofs of.—I will reconsider Slop's fall, and my too minute description of it; but, in general, I am persuaded that the happiness of the Cervantic humour arises from this very thing,—of describing silly and trifling events with the circumstantial pomp of great ones. Perhaps this is overloaded, and I can ease it.—I have a project of getting "Tristram" put into the hands of the Archbishop, if he comes down this autumn, which will ease my mind of all trouble upon the topic of discretion.

CHAPTER XI

"YORICK" IN LONDON

(1760)

Sterne's popularity—Tributes to his success—Samuel Johnson—
Sterne's life in London—His letters to Catherine de Fourmantelle
—David Garrick—Sterne in company.

It has been said in the last chapter that when Sterne came to town in March 1760 he found himself, to his surprise, the hero of the hour. The nobility called on him, and fought for the distinction of having him at their table, a Bishop took him under his wing and presented him with a purse of gold; he went to Court, where royalty smiled upon him; and a friendly peer presented him to the living of Coxwold, which he held in conjunction with Sutton and Stillington. Almost from the day he arrived in London, thinking himself unknown there, he was fêted as perhaps no one of the minor clergy had ever been fêted. So great was his fame that a wager was laid and won that a letter posted in London and addressed to "Tristram Shandy, Europe," would be delivered to him at his Yorkshire home.

"'Tristram Shandy' is still a great object of admiration, the man as well as the book," Gray

wrote to Thomas Warton in July. "One is invited to dinner where he dines a fortnight beforehand.* Even Johnson had to admit Sterne's popularity. When it was observed in his presence that there was little hospitality in London, "Nay, sir," he retorted, "any man who has a name, or who has the power of pleasing, will be very generally invited in London. The man Sterne, I have been told, has had engagements for three months." Thereupon Goldsmith remarked, "And a very dull fellow." "Why, no, sir," said Johnson.† If this tribute was not inspired merely by his love of contradiction, it was certainly generous of the doctor, for he disliked the author of "Tristram Shandy," and, as has been said, thought but little of the work. "I was but once in Sterne's company," the great man is reported to have said, "and then his only attempt at merriment consisted in his display of a drawing too indecently gross to have delighted even in a brothel." The doctor's bias against Sterne was undoubted. When a lady asked him how he liked "Yorick's Sermons," "I know nothing about them, madam," was his reply. But some time afterwards, forgetting himself, he severely censured them, whereupon the lady very aptly retorted: "I understood you to say, sir, that you had never read them." "No, madam, I

* Gray: *Letters* (ed. Gosse), Vol. III. p. 53.

† Boswell: *Life of Johnson* (ed. Birkbeck Hill), Vol. II. p. 223.

did read them ; but it was in a stage-coach. I should not have deigned to look at them, had I been at large." * It was wittily put, and no doubt earned a smile ; but, as a matter of fact, Johnson took with him to the Hebrides, "The Decay of Christian Piety," Monboddo's "Origin of Language," and Sterne's Sermons.†

Of Sterne's life in London during this visit a picture may easily be conjured up by a perusal of some of his letters to Catherine de Fourmantelle, evidently written in the highest spirits.

LONDON,
Mar. 8, 1761.]

MY DEAR KITTY,

I have arrived here safe and sound, except for the Hole in my Heart, which you have made like a dear enchanting slut as you are. I shall take lodgings this morning in Piccadilly or the Haymarket, and before I seal this letter, will let you know where to direct a letter to me, which letter I shall wait for by the return of the Post with great impatience ; so write, my dear Love, without fail. I have the greatest honors paid and most civility shown me, that were ever known from the great ; and am engaged all ready to ten Noble Men and Men of fashion to dine. Mr. Garrick pays me all and more honor than I could look for. I dined with him to-day, and he has promised numbers of great People to carry me to dine wth 'em. He has given me

* Cradock : *Memoirs*, Vol. I. p. 208.

† Boswell : *Life of Johnson* (ed. Birkbeck Hill), Vol. V. p. 227.

an Order for the Liberty of his Boxes, and of every part of his House for the whole Season ; and indeed leaves nothing undone that can do me either Service or Credit ; he has undertaken the management of the Booksellers, and will procure me a good price—but more of this in my next.

And now, my dear, dear girl ! let me assure you of the truest friendship for you, that ever man bore towards a woman. Where ever I am, my heart is warm towards you, and ever shall be till it is cold for ever. I thank you for the kind proof you gave me of your Love, and of y^r desire to make my heart easy, in ordering yourself to be denied to you know who ;—whilst I am so miserable to be separated from my dear, dear Kitty, it would have stabb'd my soul to have thought such a fellow could have the Liberty of coming near you. I therefore take this proof of your Love and good principles most kindly, and have as much faith and dependance upon you in it, as if I were at y^r Elbow ;—would to God I was at it this moment ! but I am sitting solitary and alone in my bed chamber (ten o'clock at night, after the Play), and would give a guinea for a squeeze of y^r hand. I send my soul perpetually out to see what you are adoin^g ;—wish I could send my Body with it. Adieu, dear and kind girl ! and believe me ever y^r kind friend and most aff^o admirer. I go to the Oratorio this night.—Adieu ! Adieu !

P.S.—My service to y^r Mama.

Direct to me in the Pall Mal, at y^a 2^d House from St. Alban's Street.

MY DEAR KITTY,

I should be most unhappy myself, and I know you would be so too, if I did not write to you this post, tho' I have not yet heard a word from you. Let me know, my sweet Lass ! how you go on without me, and be very particular in everything.

My lodging is every hour full of your Great People of the first Rank, who strive who shall most honor me ; even all the Bishops have sent their complim^{ts} to me, and I set out on Monday Morning to pay my visits to them all. I am to dine wth Lord Chesterfield this week, etc., etc., and next Sunday L^d Rockingham takes me to Court. I have snatch'd this single moment, tho' there is Company in my rooms, to tell my dear, dear Kitty this, and that I am hers for ever and ever.

LAU. STERNE.

MY DEAR KITTY,

Tho' I have but a moment's time to spare, I w^d not omit writing you an account of my good Fortune ; my Lord Fauconberg has this day given me a hundred and sixty pounds a-year,* w^{ch} I hold with all my preferment, so that all or the most part of my sorrows and tears are going to be wiped away. I have but one obstacle to my happiness now left, and what that is, you know as well as I.

I long most impatiently to see my dear Kitty. Tell me, tell me what day or week this will be. I had a purse of guineas given me yesterday by a Bishop ; all will do well in time.

* The living of Coxwold.

From morning to night my Lodgings, which by the by, are the genteelest in Town, are full of the greatest Company. I dined these 2 days with 2 ladies of the Bedchamber; then with L^d Rockingham, L^d Edgecomb, Lord Winchelsea, Lord Littleton, a Bishop, etc., etc.

I assure you, my Kitty, that Tristram is the Fashion. Pray to God I may see my dearest girl soon and well,

Adieu ! y^r affectionate friend,
L. STERNE.

LONDON,
April the 1st, 1760.

MY DEAR KITTY,

I am truly sorry from y^r account in your letter to find you do not leave York till the 14th, because it shortens the time I hoped to have stole in your Company when you come. I am invited by Lord Rockingham to be of his Suit when he goes to Windsor to be install'd Knight of the Garter with Prince Ferdinand * ; so that this honor done me will keep me here till the 2^d Week in May when I must go down to take possession of my Preferment. These separations, my dear Kitty, however grievous to us both, must be, for the present. God will open a Dore when we shall sometime be much more together, and enjoy our desires without fear or interruption. I have 14 engagements to Dine now in my Books, with the first Nobility. I have scarce time to tell you how much I love you, my dear Kitty, and how much I pray to God

* The installation was held on May 6, 1760.

that you may so live, and so love me, as one day to share in my great good fortune. My fortunes will certainly be made ; but more when we meet. Adieu ! Write, and believe your affⁿ friend,

L. S.

Compⁿ to Mama.

Saturday, LONDON.

MY DEAR KITTY,

I rec^d your dear letter, which gave me much pleasure with some pain, ab^t Ranalagh ; but never, my dear girl, be dejected ; something else will offer and turn out, in another Quarter. Thou mayest be assured nothing in this world shall be wanting that I can do, with discretion. I love you most tenderly, and you shall ever find me the same man of Honour and Truth. Write me what night you will be in Town, that I may keep myself at liberty to fly to thee.

God bless you, my dear Kitty.—Thy faithful
L. STERNE.

P.S.—There is a fine print going to be done of me, so I shall make the most of myself, and sell both inside and out. I take care of my health, and am hurried off my legs by going to great people. I am to be presented to the Prince.

My service to y^r Mama.

Mlle de Fourmantelle now came to town, and stayed at lodgings in Merd's Court, St. Anne's, Soho.

MY DEAR KITTY,

As I cannot propose the pleasure of your company longer than till four o'clock this afternoon, I have sent you a ticket for the Play, and hope you will go there, that I may have the satisfaction of hoping you are entertained when I am not. You are a most engaging creature, and I never spend an evening with you, but I leave a fresh part of my heart behind me. You will get me all, piece by piece, I find, before all is over; and yet I cannot think how I can be ever more than what I am at present.

Your affectionate friend,

LAURENCE STERNE.

P.S.—I will be with you soon after two o'clock, if not at two; so get y^r dinner over by then.

MY DEAR KITTY,

I was so intent upon drinking my tea with you this afternoon, that I forgot I had been engaged all this week to visit a Gentleman's Family on this day. I think I mentioned it in the beginning of the week, but your dear company put that with many other things out of my head; I will, however, contrive to give my dear friend a call at four o'clock; tho' by the by, I think it not quite prudent: but what has prudence, my dear girl, to do with Love? In this I have no government, at least not half so much as I ought.

I hope my Kitty has had a good night. May all your days and nights be happy! Some

time it may and will be more in my power to make them so.—Adieu !

If I am prevented calling at 4, I will call at 7.

DEAR KITTY,

If it would have saved my life, I have not had one hour or half-hour in my power since I saw you on Sunday ; else my dear Kitty may be sure I should not have been thus absent. Every minute of this day and to-morrow is pre-engaged, that I am so much a prisoner as if I was in Jail. I beg, dear girl, you will believe I do not spend an hour where I wish, for I wish to be with you always : but fate orders my steps, God knows how for the present.—Adieu ! Adieu !

Y^{rs} aff^y.

L. S.

On Friday, at 2 o'clock I will see you.

Garrick seems to have been almost the first man Sterne came to know well in London, and soon he was on very intimate terms with him. Remembering the kindnesses received from the actor, Sterne made appreciative reference to him in later volumes of "Tristram Shandy." "My dear friend Garrick, whom I have so much cause to esteem and honour"—so runs one allusion : and later there is another very handsome compliment :

So stood my father, holding fast his fore-finger betwixt his finger and his thumb, and reasoning

with my uncle Toby as he sat in his old fringed chair—valanced around with party-coloured worsted bobs—O Garrick! what a rich scene of this would thy exquisite powers make! and how gladly would I write such another to avail myself of thy immortality, and secure my own behind it.

Both Garrick and his wife conceived a warm regard for Sterne, and were eager to be of service to him, as, indeed, the author's letter to Mlle de Fourmantelle shows. They introduced him wherever they had the *entrée*, and, as his sponsors, were delighted by the sensation he created. John Croft has said that in a large company Sterne “was frequently at a loss and dumbfounded,” and that he “assumed the privilege of a wit,” but “frequently came out with very silly things and expressions, and, if they did not meet with that share of approbation from the Publick which he expected, he would be very angry and even affrontive.”* This sounds severe, but it was probably more malicious than accurate; and may be taken to mean little more than, as Cradock put it, “Sterne never possessed any equal spirits. He was always in the cellar or in the garret.”† Even John Croft had to admit that “Yorick” showed to much advantage in a small company. It goes without saying that

* *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 232.

† *Literary Memoirs*, Vol. I. p. 207.

Sterne was at his best among a few congenial spirits; his delicate wit and quaint humour, like his books, were not for the crowd. Doubtless in large assemblies, knowing what was expected from him, he would often, with the wish to make himself agreeable, say anything that came into his head, knowing that as it came from him it would pass for brilliant among most of his auditors. He "fell," so that dull dog Croft quaintly expressed it, "into the company and affected a set of wits in London at that time"; but, as his fall landed him among such men as Garrick, Foote, Beringer, and Delaval, he was quite at home and thoroughly happy. Walpole, writing to Sir David Dalrymple in April 1760, expressed his opinion that, "The man's head, indeed, was a little turned before, now topsyturvy with his success and fame"; and even Garrick thought his friend had "degenerated in London like an ill-transplanted shrub; the incense of the great spoiled his head, as their *ragouts* had done his stomach." This is put wittily enough, but it cannot be accepted as conclusive. There is corroborative evidence, indeed, as regards the stomach of "the man Sterne," but the head of a great humorist is not so easily turned. Sterne liked the adulation of the great and the dinners of the wealthy, and he made no secret of his pleasure; but that he was spoilt by his success is an assertion that cannot be entertained. He accepted the

invitations of the nobility, but he was no toady ; he never threw over any of his old friends, merely adding new ones to the list ; and his letters, to his dying day, were as modest and unaffected as in the days when he was an unknown man. What ill effect London had on Sterne was to make him somewhat dissatisfied with the quiet life of his country parsonage.

CHAPTER XII

“ SHANDY HALL ”

(1760—1761)

Sterne leaves London with regret—Presented to the living of Coxwold—Coxwold—“ Shandy Hall ”—Sterne removes to Coxwold—Continues “ Tristram Shandy ”—Publishes Volumes III. and IV.—Criticism, favourable and unfavourable—Second visit to London—Letters to Stephen Croft—Returns to Coxwold—Writes Volumes V. and VI. of “ Tristram Shandy ”—His ill health—Changes his publisher.

It was with a heavy heart that Sterne brought himself to leave the gaieties of the metropolis—indeed, his stay there would probably have been prolonged but for the fact that he had promised to take possession of his preferment about the middle of May. The last week in London was a busy time for him. He preached before the Judges on Sunday, he had the excitement of the publication of his Sermons on the Thursday following, and attended a concert where the Duke of York performed. “ I have received great notice from him,” he told Stephen Croft, “ and last week had the honour of supping with him,” When his departure could be no longer delayed, he bought a pair of horses, and set out.

He went first to York, where he had taken a

house for his wife and daughter during his absence in town ; * and then visited Coxwold. It is usual to speak of Lord Fauconberg as presenting Sterne to this living as a recognition of the clergyman's great talents, but there is Sterne's authority for the statement that he had earned this preferment.

Thank you most cordially, my dear lady, for your letter of congratulation upon my Lord Fauconberg's having presented me with the curacy of this place. I hope I have been of some service to his Lordship, and he has sufficiently requited me.—'Tis seventy guineas a year in my pocket, though worth a hundred—but it obliges me to have a curate to officiate at Sutton and Stillington.†

Sterne found Coxwold, to use his own words, "a sweet retirement in comparison of Sutton," and, quickly arriving at a decision to take up his residence there, he returned without delay to York, installed a curate to take charge at Sutton and Stillington, and, about the middle of June, effected his removal.

Coxwold is about seven miles north of Stillington. " 'Tis within a mile of his Lordship's seat and park. 'Tis a very agreeable ride out in the

* "I have hired a small house in the Minster Yard for my wife and daughter—the latter is to begin dancing, etc. If I cannot leave her a fortune, I will at least give her an education."
—*Sterne's Letters*.

† Sterne to Lady —, Coxwold, September 21, 1761.

chaise I purchased for my wife," he wrote to a friend when he first settled there; and that he still liked the place after seven years is clear from a passage in the "Journal to Eliza": "O 'tis a delicious retreat! both from its beauty, and air of solitude; and so sweetly does every thing about it invite your mind to rest from its labours and be at peace with itself and the world that 'tis the only place, Eliza, I could live in at this juncture." The church, which is in the Perpendicular style, and has an octagon tower, is very old, the nave dating from the middle of the fifteenth century. It stands to-day as it was in the time of Sterne, save for the chancel, which was rebuilt in 1777. Of greater interest than this structure to lovers of literature is the old parsonage, called by admirers of the humorist, even during his lifetime, "Shandy Hall." It is at the entrance to the little town, and bears marks of great antiquity. Thomas Gill, the author of "Vallis Eboracensis," thought it a strange-looking place, "too low and dark for a family mansion, and yet too romantic and beautiful for a cloister of confinement"; and it is indeed a picturesque house, one-storied, double-gabled, and double-fronted. It was in the little room on the right hand of the hall that the six last volumes of "Tristram Shandy," as well as "A Sentimental Journey," were written. The fact is commemorated by a memorial stone over the doorway of the cottage:

Dear Gerrick.

Upon reviewing my papers,
this morning, wth some unforeseen
expences — I find I should set out
with 20 p^{ts} less — than a prudent
man ought — will you lend me
twenty pounds. L. Sterne

A LETTER FROM LAURENCE STERNE TO DAVID GARRICK.

(See p. 290.)

SHANDY HALL.

HERE DWELT LAURENCE STERNE, MANY YEARS INCUMBENT OF COXWOLD.

HERE HE WROTE TRISTRAM SHANDY AND THE SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY. HE DIED IN LONDON 1768, AGED 55 YEARS.

So soon as Sterne was settled at Coxwold he set to work to write the next volumes of "Tristram Shandy," for which Dodsley was to pay, on publication, the sum of three hundred and eighty pounds. His first plan, it has been recorded, was "to travel his hero all over Europe, and, after making his remarks on the different Courts, proceed with making strictures and reflections on the different Governments of Europe, and finish the work with an eulogium on the superior constitution of England, and at length to return Tristram well-informed and a compleat English gentleman." * This idea, however, was abandoned, and the work took the course known to us. He wrote so quickly as to finish the third volume by the beginning of August.

When a man's brains are as dry as a squeez'd Orange—and he feels he has no more conceit in him than a Mallet, 'tis in vain to think of sitting down, and writing a letter to a lady of your wit, unless in the honest John-Trot-Style of, *yours of the 15th instant came safe to hand, etc.*, which, by the bye, looks like a letter of business; and you know very well, from the first letter I had the honour to write to you, I am a man of no

* John Croft, in the *Whiteford Papers*, p. 228.

business at all. This vile plight I found my genius in was the reason I have told Mr. — I would not write to you till the next post—hoping by that time to get some small recruit, at least of vivacity, if not wit, to set out with;—but upon second thoughts, thinking a bad letter in season—to be better than a good one out of it—this scrawl is the consequence, which, if you will burn the moment you get it—I promise to send you a fine set essay in the style of your female epistolizers, cut and trim'd at all points.—God defend me from such, who never yet knew what it was to say or write one premeditated word in my whole life—for this reason I send you this with pleasure, because wrote with the careless irregularity of an easy heart.—Who told you, Garrick wrote the medley for Beard?—'Twas wrote in his house, however, and before I left town.—I deny it—I was not lost two days before I left town.—I was lost all the time I was there, and never found till I got this Shandy-castle of mine.—Next winter I intend to sojourn amongst you with more decorum, and will neither be lost or found anywhere.

Now I wish to God, I was at your elbow—I have just finished one volume of Shandy, and I want to read it to some one who I know can taste and relish humour—this by the way, is a little impudent in me—for I take the thing for granted, which their high mightinesses the world have yet to determine—but I mean no such thing—I could wish only to have your opinion—shall I, in truth, give you mine?—I dare not

—but I will ; provided you keep it to yourself—know then, that I think there is more laughable humour,—with an equal degree of Cervantic satire—if not more than in the last—but we are bad judges of the merit of our children.*

When the fourth volume was finished is not known, but presumably it took longer to write than its predecessor, if, as is said, the author took the manuscript with him to London in December. While at York, *en route* for the metropolis, he wrote the famous dog-Latin letter to his friend at Crazy Castle.†

Laurence Sterne to John Hall-Stevenson

[December 1760].

Literas vestras lepidissimas, mi consobrine, consobrinis meis omnibus carior, accepi die Veneris ; sed posta non rediebat versus Aquilonem eo die, aliter scripsissem prout desiderabas. Nescio quid est materia cum me, sed sum fatigatus et ægrotus de meâ uxore plus quam unquam—et sum possessus cum diabolo qui pellet m in urbem—et tu es possessus cum eodem malo spiritu qui te tenet in deserto esse tentatum ancillis tuis, et perturbatum uxore tuâ—crede mihi, mi Antoni, quod isthæc non est via ad salutem sive hodiernam, sive eternam ;

* Sterne to "My Witty Widow," Mrs. Ferguson, August 3, 1760.

† In the early edition of Sterne's Letters, this is dated December 1767 ; but Professor Cross gives convincing reasons to prove that it was written in December 1760. (See Cross's edition of *Sterne's Letters*, 1904, Vol. I. p. xxiv.)

num tu incipis cogitare de pecuniâ, quæ, ut ait Sanctus Paulus, est radix omnium malorum, et non satis dicis in corde tuo, ego Antonius de Castello Infirmo, sum jam quadraginta et plus annos natus, et explevi octavum meum lustrum, et tempus est me curare, et meipsum Antonium facere hominem felicem et liberum, et mihimet ipse benefacere, et exhortatur Solomon, qui dicit quòd nihil est melius in hâc vitâ, quàm quòd homo vivat festivè, et quòd edat et bibat, et bono fruatur, quia hot est sua partio et dos in hoc mundo.

Nunc te scire vellemus, quòd non debeo esse reprehendi pro festinando eundo ad Londinum, quia Deus est testis, quòd non propero præ gloria, et pro me ostendere; nam diabolus iste qui me intravit, non est diabolus vanus, at consobrinus suus Lucifer—sed est diabolus amabundus, qui non vult sinere me esse solum; nam cùm non cumbendo cum uxore meâ, sum mentulatio quàm par est—et sum mortaliter in amore—et sum fatuus; ergo tu me, mi care Antoni; excusabis, quoniam tu fuisti in amore, et per mare et per terras ivisti et festinâsti sicut diabolus, eodum te propellente diabolo. Habeo multa ad te scibere—sed scribo hanc epistolam in domo coffeatoriâ et plenâ sociorum strepitosorum, qui non permittent me cogitare unam cogitationem.

Saluta amicum Panty meum, cujus literis respondebo—saluta amicos in domo Gisbrosensi, et oro, credas me vinculo consobrinitalis et amoris ad te, mi Antoni, devinctissimum,

L. STERNE.

TRANSLATION

I received your most charming letter, my best-beloved cousin, on the day of Venus ; but the post did not return northwards on that day, else I should have written as you wished. I do not know what is the matter with me, but I am more tired and sick of my wife than ever—and I am possessed with a devil who drives me into the town—and you are possessed with the same evil spirit which keeps you in the desert to be vexed by your slaves and disturbed by your wife. Believe me, my Anthony, that that kind of thing is not the way to salvation either for to-day or for eternity. When you begin to worry about money, which, as St. Paul says, is the root of all evils, and do not say in your heart, I, Anthony of Crazy Castle, am now more than forty years old, and I have exhausted my eighth lustrum, and it is time to cure myself, and to make myself, a happy and free man, and to be kind to myself as Solomon exhorts, who says that nothing is better in this life than that a man live joyously, and that he eat and drink, and delight in good, because this is his portion and endowment in this world.

Now we would have you know that I ought not to be blamed on account of having hurried to London, because God is witness, that I do not hasten on account of fame and to display myself ; for the devil who has entered into me is not a vain devil, but is an amatory devil, who is not willing to allow me to be alone ; for when not with my wife, I am more lecherous than is

proper—and I am mortally in love—and I am foolish ; therefore you will excuse me, my dear Anthony, seeing that you have been in love, and have gone through sea and land like the devil, the same devil driving you. I have many things to write you—but I am writing this letter in a coffee-house full of noisy companions, who will not permit me to think one thought.

Salute my friend Panty, whose letter I will answer—salute the friends in the house, and I pray you will believe me most closely bound in the chain of cousinship and love to you, my Anthony.

L. STERNE.

The new instalment of “Tristram Shandy,” which was first announced for “about Christmas,” appeared on January 27. It ran through the first edition in a month or six weeks, but its reception was what is now called “mixed.” Now that the first novelty had worn off, the book’s digressions were regarded as less quaint and more tedious, and the marbled pages excited scorn rather than amusement. The critics who had been surprised into appreciation by the first two volumes, seemed desirous, with the publication of the third and fourth, to recant their favourable opinions ; but no reviewer risked his reputation so rashly as did Horace Walpole, when he declared that these volumes were “the dregs of nonsense.” With Walpole was Richard Farmer, the Master of

Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who said in the combination-room, " You young men seem very fond of talking of 'Tristram Shandy'; but, mark my words, however much it may be talked about at present, yet, depend upon it, in the course of twenty years, should any one wish to refer to it, he will be obliged to go to an antiquarian for it." * One hundred and fifty years have passed, but new editions of the book are still called for, and those who go to an antiquarian for the first edition must be prepared to pay heavily.

If, however, Sterne lost some ground with the reviewers, it affected not a whit his popularity with society. He was fêted as much on this as on his first visit. Invitations to dinner were, as before, showered on him; he was induced to preach a Charity sermon at the Foundling Hospital; he was again taken to Court, and Stephen Croft thought it worth while to enlist his influence to further the interest of his son, also named Stephen, who was in the Army. The only letters of this visit preserved are addressed to Stephen Croft, senior, and it is amusing to see the clergyman who, twelve months before, was a very obscure person, hobnobbing with cabinet ministers and writing of politics from inside knowledge.

* Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (ed. Croker), Vol. II. p. 339.

Laurence Sterne to Stephen Croft

LONDON,
Christmas Day, 1760.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have been in such a continual hurry since the moment I arrived here—what with my books, and what with visitors and visitings, that it was not in my power sooner to sit down and acknowledge the favour of your obliging letter; and to thank you for the most friendly motives which led you to write it: I am not much in pain upon what gives my kind friends at Stillington so much on the chapter of *Noses*—because, as the principal satire throughout that part is levelled at those learned blockheads who, in all ages, have wasted their time and much learning upon points as foolish—it shifts off the idea of what you fear, to another point—and 'tis thought here very good—'twill pass muster—I mean not with all—no—no! I shall be attacked and pelted, either from cellars or garrets, write what I will—and besides, must expect to have a party against me of many hundreds—who either do not—or will not laugh.—'Tis enough if I divide the world;—at least I will rest contented with it.—I wish you was here to see what changes of looks and political reasoning have taken place in every company and coffee-house since last year; we shall be soon Prussians and Anti-Prussians, B[ute]s, and Anti-B[ute]s, and those distinctions will just do as well as Whig and Tory—and for aught I know serve the same ends.—The King seems resolved to bring all things back to their original princi-

ples, and to stop the torrent of corruption and laziness.—He rises every morning at six to do business—rides out at eight to a minute, returns at nine to give himself up to his people.—By persisting, 'tis thought he will oblige his Ministers and dependants to dispatch affairs with him many hours sooner than of late—and 'tis much to be question'd whether they will not be enabled to wait upon him sooner by being freed from long levees of their own, and applications; which will in all likelihood be transferr'd from them directly to himself—the present system being to remove that phalanx of great people, which stood betwixt the throne and the subjects, and suffer them to have immediate access without the intervention of a cabal—(this is the language of others): however, the King gives everything himself, knows everything, and weighs everything maturely, and then is inflexible—this puts old stagers off their game—how it will end we are all in the dark.

'Tis feared the war is quite over in Germany; never was known such havoc amongst troops—I was told yesterday by a Colonel from Germany, that out of two battalions of nine hundred men, to which he belong'd, but seventy-one are left!—Prince Ferdinand has sent word, 'tis said, that he must have forty thousand men directly to take the field—and with provisions for them too, for he can but subsist them for a fortnight—I hope this will find you all got to York—I beg my compliments to the amiable Mrs. Croft, etc., etc.

Tho' I purposed going first to Golden-Square,

yet fate has thus long disposed of me—so I have never been able to set a foot towards that quarter. I am, dear sir,

Yours affectionately,

L. STERNE.

From Laurence Sterne to Stephen Croft

[About January, 1761.]

MY DEAR SIR,

I have just time to acknowledge the favour of yours, but not to get the two prints you mention—which shall be sent you by next post—I have bought them, and lent them to Miss Gilbert,* but will assuredly send for them and enclose them to you :—I will take care to get your pictures well copied, and at a moderate price. And if I can be of further use, I beseech you to employ me ; and from time to time will send you an account of whatever may be worth transmitting.—The stream now sets in strong against the German war. Loud complaints of [Pitt's (?)] making a trade of the war, etc., etc., much expected from Ld. Granby's evidence to these matters, who is expected every hour :—the King wins every day upon the people, shews himself much at the play (but at no opera), rides out with his brothers every morning, half an hour after seven, till nine—returns with them—spends an hour with them at breakfast, and chat—and then sits down to business. I never

* Emma, daughter of John Gilbert, Archbishop of York. She married George, third Baron Mount-Edgcumbe, at her father's house at Twickenham, on August 6, 1761, three days before the death of the Archbishop.

dined at home once since I arrived—am fourteen dinners deep engaged just now, and fear matters will be worse with me in that point than better.—As to the main points in view, at which you hint—all I can say is, that I see my way, and unless Old Nick throws the dice—shall, in due time, come off winner.—“Tristram” will be out on the twentieth—there is a great rout made about him before he enters the stage—whether this will be of use or no, I can’t say—some wits of the first magnitude here, both as to wit and station, engage me success—time will shew—

Adieu.

Laurence Sterne to Stephen Croft

[LONDON, *March* (?) 1761].

DEAR SIR,

Since I had the favour of your obliging letter, nothing has happened, or been said one day, which has not been contradicted the next ; so having little certain to write, I have forebore writing at all, in hopes every day of something worth filling up a letter. We had the greatest expectations yesterday that ever were raised, of a pitched battle in the House of Commons, wherein Mr. Pitt was to have entered and thrown down the gauntlet, in defence of the German war.—There never was so full a house—the gallery full to the top—I was there all the day—when lo ! a political fit of the gout seized the great combatant—he entered not the lists—Beckford got up, and begged the house, as he saw not his right honourable friend there, to put

off the debate—it could not be done ; so Beckford rose up, and made a most long, passionate, incoherent speech, in defence of the Germanic war—but very severe upon the unfrugal manner it was carried on—in which he addressed himself principally to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and laid on him terribly.—It seems the chancery of Hanover had laid out 850,000 pounds, on account, and brought in our treasury debtor—and the grand debate was, for an honest examination of the particulars of this extravagant account, and for vouchers to authenticate it.—Legge answered Beckford very rationally, and coolly—Lord N[orth] spoke long—Sir F. Dashwood maintained the German war was most pernicious—Mr. C——, of Surry, spoke well against the account, with some others—L[ord] Barrington at last got up, and spoke half an hour with great plainness, and temper—explained a great many hidden springs relating to these accounts, in favour of the late King, and told two or three conversations which had passed between the King and himself, relative to these expences—which cast great honour upon the King's character. This was with regard to the money the King had secretly furnished out of his pocket to lessen the account of the Hanover-score brought us to discharge.

Beckford and Barrington abused all who fought for peace, and joined in the cry for it ; and Beckford added, that the reasons of wishing a peace now, were the same as the Peace of Utrecht—that the people behind the curtain could not both maintain the war and their

places too, so were for making another sacrifice of the nation, to their own interests.—After all—the cry for a peace is so general, that it will certainly end in one. Now for myself.—

One half of the town abuse my book as bitterly, as the other half cry it up to the skies—the best is, they abuse and buy it, and at such a rate, that we are going on with a second edition, as fast as possible.

I am going down for a day or two with Mr. Spencer,* to Wimbledon; on Wednesday there is to be a grand assembly at Lady N——. I have enquired everywhere about Stephen [Croft]'s affair, and can hear nothing.—My friend, Mr. Charles Townshend,† will now be secretary of war—he bid me wish him joy of it, though not in possession.—I will ask him—and depend, my most worthy friend, that you shall not be ignorant of what I learn from him—believe me ever, ever,

Yours,

L. S.

Laurence Sterne to Stephen Croft

[April, 1761.]

MY DEAR SIR,

A strain which I got in my wrist by a terrible fall, prevented my acknowledging the favour of your obliging letter. I went yesterday morning to breakfast with Mr. V——, who is a kind of right-hand man to the secretary, on purpose

* John Spencer, created Viscount Spencer, April 1761; Earl Spencer, November 1, 1765.

† Succeeded Viscount Barrington as Secretary-at-War, March 24, 1761.

to enquire about the propriety, or feasibility, of doing what you wish me—and he has told me an anecdote which, had you been here, would, I think, have made it wiser to have deferred speaking about the affair a month hence than now : it is this—You must know that the numbers of officers who have left their regiments in Germany, for the pleasures of the town, have been long a topic for merriment ; as you see them in St. James's Coffee-house, and the Park, every hour, enquiring, open mouth, how things go on in Germany, and what news ;—when they should have been there to have furnished news themselves—but the worst part has been, that many of them have left their brother officers on their duty, and in all the fatigues of it, and have come with no end but to make friends, to be put unfairly over the *heads of those* who were left risking *their lives*.—In this attempt there have been some but too successful, which has justly raised ill-blood and complaints from the officers who staid behind—the upshot has been, that they have every soul been ordered off, and woe be to him ('tis said) who shall be found listening ! Now just to mention our friend's case whilst this cry is on foot, I think would be doing more hurt than good ; but if you think otherwise, I will go with all my heart, and mention it to Mr. Townshend, for to do more I am too inconsiderable a person to pretend to.—You made me and my friends here very merry with the accounts current at York, of my being forbid the Court—but they do not consider what a considerable person they make of me, when

they suppose either my going, or my not going there, is a point that ever enters the King's head—and for those about him, I have the honour either to stand so personally well known to them, or to be so well represented by those of the first rank, as to fear no accident of that kind.

I thank God (B——'s excepted) I have never yet made a friend or connection I have forfeited, or done ought to forfeit—but, on the contrary, my true character is better understood, and where I had one friend last year, who did me honour, I have three now.—If my enemies knew, that by this rage of abuse, and ill-will, they were effectually serving the interests both of myself, and works, they would be more quiet—but it has been the fate of my betters, who have found, that the way to fame, is like the way to Heaven—through much tribulation,—and till I shall have the honour to be as much mal-treated as Rabelais and Swift were, I must continue humble;—for I have not filled up the measure of half their *persecutions*.

The Court is turning topsy-turvy. Lord Bute,* *le premier*—Lord Talbot, to be groom of the chambers in room of the D. of R[utlan]d—Lord Halifax to Ireland—Sir F. Dashwood in Talbot's place—Pitt seems unmoved—a peace inevitable—Stocks rise—the peers this moment kissing hands, etc., etc. (this week may be christened the kiss-hands week) for a hundred

* Lord Bute, appointed Secretary of State for the Northern Department, March 25, 1761, and First Lord of the Treasury, May 1761.

changes will happen in consequence of these. Pray present my compliments to Mrs. C[roft] and all friends, and believe me, with the greatest fidelity,

Your ever obliged

L. STERNE.

P.S. Is it not strange that Lord Talbot should have power to remove the Duke of R[utlan]d ?

Pray, when you have read this, send the news to Mrs. Sterne.

So much did Sterne enjoy himself in London that again and again he put off his return. He did not, indeed, return to Coxwold until May, and even then he hungered after the cakes and ales of the metropolis.

Laurence Sterne to John Hall-Stevenson

August 1761.

I rejoice you are in London. Rest you there in peace ; here 'tis the devil.—You was a good prophet.—I wish myself back again, as you told me I should—but not because a thin, death-doing, pestiferous, north-east wind blows in a line direct from Crazy-castle turret full upon me in this cuckoldy retreat (for I value the north-east wind and all its powers not a straw),—but the transition from rapid motion to absolute rest was too violent.—I should have walked about the streets of York ten days, as a proper medium to have passed through, before I entered upon

my rest.—I staid but a moment, and I have been here but a few, to satisfy me I have not managed my miseries like a wise man—and if God, for my consolation under them, had not poured forth the spirit of Shandeism into me, which will not suffer me to think two moments upon any grave subject, I would else, just lie down and die—die—and yet, in half an hour’s time, I’ll lay a guinea, I shall be as merry as a monkey—and as mischievous too, and forget it all—so that this is but a copy of the present brain running cross my brain. . . . ’Tis as cold and churlish just now, as (if God had not pleased it to be so) it ought to have been in bleak December, and therefore I am glad you are where you are, and where (I repeat it again) I wish I was also. . . . Oh, Lord! now you are going to Ranelagh to-night, and I am sitting, sorrowful as the prophet was, when the voice cried out to him and said, “What dost thou here, Elijah?”—’Tis well the spirit does not make the same at Coxwold—for unless for the few sheep left me to take care of, in this wilderness, I might as well, nay better, be at Mecca.

Sterne, with the thought of preferment in his mind, soon after his return to Coxwold wrote a clerum; but, “whether I shall take my doctor’s degree or no,” he wrote to Hall-Stevenson, “I am in doubt, but I trow not.” He never took the degree. In August he was hard at work on the fifth and sixth volumes of “Tristram Shandy.”

I am scribbling away at my *Tristram* [he wrote on September 21]. These two volumes are, I think, the best—I shall write as long as I live; 'tis, in fact, my hobby-horse: and so much am I delighted with my uncle Toby's imaginary character, that I am become an enthusiast.—My Lydia helps to copy for me—and my wife knits, and listens as I read her chapters.

The life at Coxwold was very quiet, which was probably better for the book. Some writers require social gaiety and high feeding to aid their genius; Sterne, on the other hand, seemed to develop in solitude after a period of excitement. Sometimes, presumably, he went to York, and occasionally he visited Lord Fauconberg; but his sermons and his literary labours occupied him almost exclusively until the winter. His relations with his wife, unfortunately, were no better.

Laurence Sterne to John Hall-Stevenson

August 1761.

Curse of poverty, and absence from those we love!—they are the two great evils which embitter all things—and yet with the first I am not haunted much.—As to matrimony, I should be a beast to rail at it, for my wife is easy—but the world is not—and had I staid from her a second longer, it would have been a burning

shame—else she declares herself happier without me—but not in anger is this declaration made—but in pure sober good-sense, built on sound experience—she hopes you will be able to strike a bargain for me before this time twelvemonth, to lead a bear round Europe: and from this hope from you, I verily believe it is, that you are so high in her favour at present. She swears you are a fellow of wit, though humorous; a funny, jolly soul, though somewhat splenetic; and (barring the love of woman) as honest as *gold*—how do you like the simile?

Mrs. Sterne, notwithstanding, did not approve of her husband's visits to London, and apparently she resented the attention shown him when he was there by her cousin, Mrs. Montagu. Sterne had, at the time of his marriage, been unfavourably reported to her by Matthew Robinson, who had written: “Our cousin, Betty Lumley, is married to a Parson who once delighted in debauchery, who is possessed of about £100 a year in preferment, and has a good prospect of more. What hopes our relation may have of settling the affections of a light and fickle man I know not, but I imagine she will set about it not by means of the beauty, but of the arm of flesh.”

Any prejudice Mrs. Lumley may subsequently have had seems to have been dissipated when she made Sterne's acquaintance.

Laurence Sterne to Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu

MADAM,

I never was so much at a loss as I find myself at this instant that I am going to answer the letter I have had the honour and happiness to receive from you by Mr. Torriano ; being ten times more oppress'd with the excess of your candour and goodness than I was before with the subject of my complaint. It was entirely owing to the Idea I had in common with all the world of Mrs. Montagu's that I felt sorrow at all—or communicated what I felt to my friend ; which last step I should not have taken but from the great reliance I had upon the excellency of your character. I wanted mercy—but not sacrifice, and am obliged, in my turn, to beg pardon of you, which I do from my soul, for putting you to the pain of excusing, what in fact was more a misfortune, than a fault, and but a necessary consequence of a train of Impressions given to my disadvantage. The Chancellor of York, Dr. Herring, was, I suppose, the person who interested himself in the honour of the Dean of York, and requested that act of friendship to be done to the Dean, by bringing about a separation betwixt the Dean and myself—the poor gentleman has been labouring this point many years—but not out of zeal for the Dean's character, but to secure the next residentiaryship to the Dean of St. Asaph, his son ; he was outwitted himself at last, and has now all the foul play to settle with his conscience without gaining or being ever

likely to gain his purpose. I take the liberty of enclosing a letter I wrote last month to the Dean, which will give some light into my hard measure, and show you that I was as much a protection to the Dean of York—as he to me. The answer to this has made me easy with regard to my views in the Church of York, and as it has cemented anew the Dean and myself beyond the power of any future breach, I thought it would give you satisfaction to see how my interests stand, and how much and how undeserved I have been abused: when you have read it—it shall never be read more, for reasons your penetration will see at once.

I return you thanks for the interest you took in my wife, and there is not an honest man, who will not do me the justice to say, I have ever given her the character of as moral and virtuous a woman as ever God made—what occasion'd discontent ever betwixt us is now no more—we have settled accounts to each other's satisfaction and honour, and I am persuaded shall end our days without one word of reproach or even Incivility.

Mr. Torriano made me happy in acquainting me that I was to dine with you on Friday; it shall ever be my care as well as my Principle ever to behave so that you may have no cause to repent of your goodness to me.

I am, Madam,

With the truest gratitude,

Your most obliged and aff^o Kinsman,

LAUR. STERNE.*

* Mrs. Climençon : *Elizabeth Montagu*, Vol. II. p. 175.

Mrs. Sterne to Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu

Cou'd Mrs. Montagu think this the way to make a bad husband better, she might indeed have found a better, which I have often urg'd, though to little purpose, namely some little mark of kindness or regard to me as a kinswoman. I meant not such as would have cost her money, but indeed this neither she nor any one of the Robinsons vouchsafed to do, though they have seen Mr. Sterne frequently the last two winters, and will the next, so that surely never poor girl who had done no one thing to merit such neglect was ever so cast off by her Relations as I have been. I writ three posts ago to inform Mrs. Montagu of the sorrow her indifferation has brought upon me, and beg'd she wou'd do all that was in her power to undo the mischief, though I can't for my soul see which way, and must expect to the last hour of my life to be reproach'd by Mr. Sterne as the blaster of his fortunes. I learn from Mr. Sterne that there was both letters and conversations pass'd betwixt them last winter on this subject, and though I was an utter stranger to that and every part of this affair till ten days ago, when the Chancellor wrote his first Letter, which Mr. Sterne communicated to me. Yet in several he wrote to me from London he talk'd much of the honours and civilities Mrs. Montagu show'd him, which I was well pleas'd to hear, as the contrary behaviour must have wrought me sorrow. I only wish'd that amongst them she had mixt some to her cousin, but that I heard not one syllable of. I beg you will give me one

gleam of comfort by answering this directly. Mr. Sterne is on the wing for London, and we remove to York at the same time, so that I fear thy letter will not arrive before me. Direct to Newton. Mine and Lydia's love.

Thine most truly and affectionately,
E. STERNE.*

Hall-Stevenson could find no bear for his friend to lead round Europe, but it was necessary for Sterne to leave England for a warmer climate; he did not dare again to face the rigours of a winter in northern latitudes. His health, indeed, was breaking. It is true, as is often stated, that his months of bustle and excitement in London were harmful, but it is almost equally certain that the disease would have declared itself. All the children of his father were weak, and indeed only three survived. While at Cambridge Laurence discovered that his lungs were affected, and there he had the first of the pulmonary attacks which troubled him at intervals and brought his life to a premature end. With what quiet courage during his last years he faced death will presently appear.

When the fifth and sixth volumes of "Tristram Shandy" were finished, Sterne came to London to make arrangements for their publication. Dodsley was not to issue them, probably because he and the author could not agree upon terms; and the honour fell upon the firm of

* Mrs. Climençon : *Elizabeth Montagu*, Vol. II. p. 176.

Thomas Becket, and P. A. De Hondt, trading at Tully's Head, "near Surry Street in the Strand." Becket and De Hondt henceforth published all Sterne's books. Each volume of this, the third instalment of "Tristram Shandy," had Sterne's autograph signature, probably as an indication that it was by the author of the earlier volumes—imitations of the work still appearing, under designedly misleading titles, immediately before and after the publication. The writer of the notice of these volumes in *The Critical Review* was kind enough to say that such a precaution was unnecessary, because "we find the same unconnected rhapsody, the same rambling digression, the eccentric humour, the peculiar wit, petulance, pruriency, and ostentation of learning, by which the former part was so happily distinguished." Although there was the same enthusiasm for each succeeding issue of "Tristram Shandy," yet the public interest, as evinced by the demand, was still keen; and indeed, the fifth and sixth volumes contain many famous passages, and, notably, the exquisite story of Lieutenant Le Fever, which the author inscribed to Lady Spencer, "for which," he said, "I have no other motive, which my heart has informed me of, but that the story is a humane one." The rest of the two volumes are dedicated to Lord Spencer, as being "the best my talents, with such bad health as I have, could produce."

CHAPTER XIII

AT PARIS

(1762)

Sterne's ill health—High spirits—Defiance of death—Goes abroad—Dover—Calais—Paris—Popularity at Paris—Tollet's tribute—And Voltaire's—An amusing incident—Thackeray's misrepresentation of it—Letters from Paris—Arrival of Mrs. Sterne and Lydia at Paris.

STERNE was very ill at the end of the year; so ill, indeed, that, though he did not lose heart, he thought it more than likely that he might die before many months had passed.

Now as to my spirits, little have I to lay to their charge—nay, so very little (unless the mounting me upon a long stick, and playing the fool with me nineteen hours out of the twenty-four, be accusations) that on the contrary, I have much—much to thank 'em for: cheerily have ye made me tread the path of life with all my burdens of it (except its cares) upon my back: in no one moment of my existence, that I remember, have ye once deserted me, or tinged the objects which came in my way, either with sable, or with a sickly green; in dangers ye gilded my horizon with hope, and when DEATH himself knocked at my door—ye

bad him come again ; and in so gay a tone of careless indifference did ye do it, that he doubted of his commission.

“There must certainly be some mistake in this matter,” quoth he.*

Good spirits alone will not keep death at a distance, however, and Sterne made up his mind that he must, without further delay, obey his physician’s injunction to go abroad.

“I have forty volumes to write, and forty thousand things to say and do, which nobody in the world will say and do for me, except thyself ; and as thou seest he has got me by the throat (for Eugenius could scarce hear me speak across the table), and that I am no match for him in the open field, had I not better, whilst these few scattered spirits remain, and these two spider legs of mine (holding one of them up to him) are able to support me—had I not better, Eugenius, fly for my life ?”

“’Tis my advice, my dear Tristram,” said Eugenius.

“Then by Heaven ! I will lead him a dance he little thinks of—for I will gallop,” quoth I, “without looking once behind me, to the banks of the Garonne ; and if I hear him clattering at my heels—I’ll scamper away to Mount Vesuvius—from thence to Joppa, and from Joppa to the world’s end, where, if he follows me, I pray God he may break his neck.”

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. VII. ch. i.

"He runs more risk there," said Eugenius, "than thou."*

Hall-Stevenson's witty compliment pleased Sterne mightily, and sent him off on his journey smiling. He had already, however, made all preparations in case he never returned, and his last act in England was to leave a letter with Mrs. Montagu, containing his last wishes.

Memorandums left with Mrs. Montagu in case I should die abroad.

L. STERNE.

December 28, 1761.

My sermons in a trunk at my friend Mr. Hall's, St. John's Street, 2 Vols. to be picked out of them.—N.B. There are enough for 3 Vols.

My Letters in my bureau at Coxwoud and a bundle in a trunk with my sermons.—

Note. The large piles of letters in the garrets at York, to be sifted over, in search for some either of Wit, or Humour,—or what is better than both—of Humanity and good Nature—these will make a couple of Volumes *more*, and as not one of 'em was ever wrote, like Pope's or Voltaire's, to be printed, they are more likely to be read—if there wants ought to serve the completion of a 3rd. volume—the "Political Romance" I wrote, which was never publish'd—may be added to the fag end of the volumes. . . . Tho' I have 2 reasons why I wish it may not

* *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. VII. ch. i.

be wanted—first an undeserved compliment to one, whom I have since found to be a very corrupt man—I knew him weak and ignorant—but thought him honest. The other reason is I have hung up Dr. Topham in the romance in a ridiculous light—which upon my soul I now doubt whether he deserves it—so let the “Romance” go to sleep not by itself—for ’twil have company.

My *Conscio ad Clinum* in Latin which I made for Fountayne, to preach before the University to enable him to take his Doctor’s Degree—you will find 2 copies of it, with my sermons.—

—He got Honour by it—What got I?—Nothing in my lifetime, then let me not (I charge you, Mrs. Sterne) be robbed of it after my death. That long pathetic letter to him of the hard measure I have received—I charge you, to let it be printed.—’Tis equitable you should derive that good from my sufferings at least.

I have made my will—but I leave all I have to you and my Lydia—you will not Quarrel about it—but I advise you to sell my estate, which will bring 1800 pds. (or more after the year), and what you can raise from my Works—and the sale of the last copyright of the 5th and 6th Vols. of “Tristram”—and the produce of this last work, all of which I have left (except 50 pds. in my bookseller Becket’s hands, and which Mr. Garrick will receive and lay out in stocks for me)—all these I would advise you to collect—together with the sale of my library,

etc., etc.,—and lay it out in Government Securities.—If my Lydia should marry—I charge you—I charge you over again (that you may remember it the more)—That upon no Delusive prospect, or promise from any one, you leave yourself **DEPENDENT**; reserve enough for your comfort—or let her wait your Death. I leave this in the hands of our Cosin Mrs. Montagu—not because she is our cosin—but because I am sure she has a good heart.

We shall meet again.

Memth. Whenever I die—'tis most probable, I shall have about £200 due to me from my living.—If Lydia should dye before you; Leave my Sister something worthy of yourself—in case you do not think it meet to purchase an annuity for your greater comfort; if you chuse that—do it in God's name.

The picture of the Mountebank and his Macaroni—is in a Lady's hands, who upon seeing 'em most cavalierly declared she would never part with them—and from an excess of civility—or rather weakness I could not summon up severity to demand them.

If I dye, her Name, etc., is inclosed in a billet seal'd up and given with this—and then you must demand them.—If refused—you have nothing to do but send a 2d. message importing —'tis not for her Interest to keep them.

LAURENCE STERNE.*

Sterne went post to Dover, too ill to pay any attention to the town and country through

* Mrs. Climençon : *Elisabeth Montagu*, Vol. II. p. 270.

which he passed, and, after a rough crossing, arrived half-dead at Calais. With but little delay, he made his way to Paris, where he remained until his wife and daughter joined him.

"Tristram Shandy," though it had not yet been translated into French, seems to have been nearly as well known at Paris as in London, and the author found himself the centre of attraction. Every one was anxious to pay him attention; he was invited everywhere; and, to the detriment of his health, went everywhere he was invited. He soon became very popular, and there is no doubt he was an amusing companion, "ce bon et agréable Tristram," as his friend Tollot called him.

Cela me fait envier quelque fois les heureuses dispositions de notre ami M. Sterne [Tollot wrote at this time to Hall-Stevenson]; tous les objects sont couleur de rose pour cet heureux mortel, et se qui se presente aux yeux des autres sous un aspect triste et lugubre, prends aux siens une face gaye et riante; il ne poursuit que le plaisir, et il ne fait pas comme d'autres qui quand ils l'ont atteint ne savent pas le plus souvent enjouir, pour lui il boit le *bole* jusques à la dernière goutte et encore n'y a t'il moien de le désaltérer.

A greater man than Tollot bore testimony to Sterne's popularity in France. "Un autre Anglais," wrote Voltaire, "amusa singulièrement les esprit gais à Paris par son originalité

piquante, et donna les émotions nouvelles aux âmes tendres par la sensibilité la plus naïve, la plus prompte et la plus touchante." Voltaire, reserving the place of honour for Swift, called Sterne "le second Rabelais d'Angleterre"; and he noticed, what had already been discovered at home, that, "Jamais un auteur et ses ouvrages ne sont ressemblés davantage : les lire ou le voir l'entendre, c'était presque la même chose."

Sterne may have rewarded his kind entertainers very much in the manner he says he did in the last chapter on "Paris" in "A Sentimental Journey," by paying them neatly turned compliments. It was certainly always his intention to delight the company assembled in his honour, but once his desire to be amusing led him into a position that was uncomfortable and might, indeed, have been very awkward. He was dining on June 4 with Lord Tavistock at a party given in honour of the King's birthday, and during the evening he asked his neighbour at the table if he knew Louis Dutens. "Yes," said the neighbour. The whole company laughed, and Sterne, thinking that it must be because Dutens was a singular character, pursued his inquiries. "Is he not rather a strange fellow?" His neighbour replied that Dutens was "an original." "I thought so. I have heard him spoken of," said Sterne; and he drew a fanciful picture of him, becoming more and more extravagant in his description as he saw

the others more and more amused. Not until his neighbour withdrew was Sterne informed that the neighbour was Dutens himself. Then those present tried to frighten him by saying that only respect for his host had kept Dutens silent, but that he was a firebrand and would certainly send his seconds to demand satisfaction. Sterne was not alarmed—supposing him to be a coward, and for that there is no warrant, clergymen even in those days did not fight duels; but he thought he had carried his raillery too far, and the next morning called on Dutens, and apologised for having allowed his high spirits to run away with him, being tempted to amuse a company that had been moved to mirth at the mention of the other's name. Dutens assured his visitor that he had been as amused as any one present, and that nothing offensive had been said. They shook hands and became good friends.*

Even this not very shocking incident has been made an opportunity to belabour Sterne, who certainly has been very unfortunate in being so frequently misrepresented. The offender in this instance was, not for the first time, Thackeray, who, having read the story, introduced it into "A Roundabout Journey," *à propos des bottes*, and for no better reason than that he was enraged by *The Saturday Review* calling Sterne "a true gentleman."

* Dutens: *Memoirs of a Traveller*, Vol. II. pp. 5-8.



DAVID GARRICK.

(See p. 298.)

From an engraving by Schiavonetti after a portrait by Reynolds.

Ah, dear Laurence ! You are lucky in having such a true gentleman as my friend to appreciate you ! You see he was lying, but then he was amusing the whole company. When Laurence found they were amused, he told more lies. Your true gentlemen always do. Even to get the laugh at a strange table, perhaps you and I would not tell lies ; but then we are not true gentlemen. And see in what a true gentleman-like way Laurence carried off the lies ! A man who wasn't accustomed to lying might be a little disconcerted with a person to whose face he had been uttering abuse and falsehood. Not so Laurence. He goes to Dutens :—it is true he had heard that the other was *peu traitable*—a rough customer (if my superfine friend will pardon the vulgarity of the expression :) he goes to Dutens, embraces him, and asks for his friendship ! Heaven bless him ! Who would not be honoured by the friendship of a true gentleman, who has just told lies about you to your face ? *

Beyond this episode of Sterne abroad there is little to be gleaned, save from his letters and the autobiographical passages in his works. Some writers, by paraphrasing these, have made a fair show of incident ; but certainly the simplest, and perhaps the best, way is to print the correspondence with as little comment as possible.

* *Cornhill Magazine*, November 1860.

Laurence Sterne to David Garrick

PARIS, January 31, 1762.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Think not, because I have been a fortnight in this metropolis without writing to you, that therefore I have not had you and Mrs. Garrick a hundred times in my head and heart—heart! yes, yes, say you—but I must not waste paper in *badinage* this post, whatever I do the next. Well! here I am, my friend, as much improved in my health, for the time, as even your friendship could wish, or, at least, your faith give credit to—by the bye I am somewhat worse in my intellectuals, for my head is turned round with what I see, and the unexpected honours I have met with here. “Tristram” was almost as much known here as in London, at least among your men of condition and learning, and has got me introduced into so many circles (*’tis comme à Londres*). I have just now a fortnight’s dinners and suppers upon my hands—My application* to the Count de Choiseul goes on swimmingly, for not only Mr. Pelletière (who, by the bye, sends ten thousand civilities to you and Mrs. Garrick) has undertaken my affair, but the Count de Limbours—the Baron d’Holbach, has offered any security for the inoffensiveness of my behaviour in France—’tis more, you rogue! than you will do.—This Baron is one of the most learned men here, the great protector of wits, and the Sçavans

* Sterne had come to France without a passport, which was then a necessity.

who are no wits—keeps open house three days a week—his house is now, as yours was to me, my own—he lives at great expence.—’Twas an odd incident when I was introduced to the Count de Bissie, which I was at his desire—I found him reading “Tristram”—this grandee does me great honours, and gives me leave to go a private way through his apartments into the Palais Royal, to view the Duke of Orleans’ collections, every day I have time—I have been at the doctors of Sorbonne—I hope in a fortnight to break through, or rather from, the delights of this place, which, in the *sçavoir vivre*, exceeds all the places, I believe, in this section of the globe.—

I am going, when this letter is wrote, with Mr. Fox * and Mr. Maccartney † to Versailles—the next morning I wait upon Mons. Titon, in company with Mr. Maccartney, who is known to him, to deliver your commands. I have bought you the pamphlet upon theatrical, or rather tragical, declamation—I have bought another in verse, worth reading, and you will receive them, with what I can pick up this week, by a servant of Mr. Hodges, whom he is sending back to England.

I was last night with Mr. Fox to see Made-moiselle Clairon, in *Iphigène*—she is extremely great—would to God you had one or two like her—what a luxury to see you with one of such powers in the same interesting scene—but ’tis too much—Ah! Prévile! thou art Mercury

* (?) Stephen Fox, afterwards second Lord Holland.

† George (afterwards Earl) Macartney.

himself.—By virtue of taking a couple of boxes, we have bespoke, this week, *The Frenchman in London*, in which Prévile is to send us home to supper, *all happy*—I mean about fifteen or sixteen English of distinction, who are now here, and live well with each other.

I am under great obligations to Mr. Pitt, who has behaved in every respect to me like a man of good breeding, and good nature.—In a post or two, I will write again—Foley* is an honest soul—I could write six volumes of what has passed comically in this great scene, since these last fourteen days ;—but more of this hereafter.—We are all going into mourning ; nor you, nor Mrs. Garrick, would know me, if you met me in my *remise*—bless you both ! Service to Mrs. Denis. Adieu, adieu !

L. S.

Laurence Sterne to Lady D—

PARIS, February 1, 1762.

Your Ladyship's kind enquiries after my health are indeed kind, and of a piece with the rest of your character. Indeed I am very ill, having broke a vessel in my lungs—hard writing in the summer, together with preaching, which I have not strength for, is ever fatal to me—but I cannot avoid the latter yet, and the former is too pleasurable to be given up.—I believe I shall try if the south of France will not be of service to me—his G. of Y.† has most

* A partner in the banking house of Panchaud et Foley.

† His Grace of York, i.e. Archbishop Hay Drummond.

humanely given me the permission for a year or two.—I shall set off with great hopes of its efficacy, and shall write to my wife and daughter to come and join me at Paris, else my stay could not be so long—"Le Fever's story has beguiled your Ladyship of your tears," and the thought of the accusing spirit flying up to heaven's chancery with the oath, you are kind enough to say is sublime—my friend, Mr. Garrick, thinks so too, and I am most vain of his approbation—your Ladyship's opinion adds not a little to my vanity.

I wish I had time to take a little excursion to Bath, were it only to thank you for all the obliging things you say in your letter—but 'tis impossible—accept at least my warmest thanks.—If I could tempt my friend Mr. H. to come to France, I should be truly happy.—If I can be of any service to you at Paris, command him who is, and ever will be,

Your Ladyship's faithful
L. STERNE.

Laurence Sterne to Mrs. Sterne, at York

PARIS, March 15, 1762.

MY DEAR,

Having an opportunity of writing by a physician, who is posting off for London to-day, I would not omit doing it, though you will possibly receive a letter (which is gone from hence last post) at the very same time. I send to Mr. Foley's every mail-day, to inquire for a letter from you; and if I do not get one in a

post or two, I shall be greatly surprised and disappointed. A terrible fire happened here last night, the whole fair of St. Germain's burned to the ground in a few hours; and hundreds of unhappy people are now going crying along the streets, ruined totally by it. This fair of St. Germain's is built upon a spot of ground covered and tiled, as large as the Minster Yard, entirely of wood, divided into shops, and formed into little streets, like a town in miniature. All the artizans in the Kingdom come with their wares—jewellers, silversmiths,—and have free leave from all parts of the world to profit by a general license from the Carnival to Easter. They compute the loss at six millions of livres, which these poor creatures have sustained, not one of which has saved a single shilling, and many fled out in their shirts, and have not only lost their goods and merchandise, but all the money they have been making these six weeks. "*Oh! ces moments de malheur sont terribles,*" said my barber to me, as he was shaving me this morning; and the good-natured fellow uttered it with so moving an accent, that I could have found it in my heart to have cried over the perishable and uncertain tenure of every good in this life.

I have been three mornings together to hear a celebrated pulpit orator near me, one Père Clement, who delights me much; the parish pays him 600 livres for a dozen sermons this Lent; he is K[ing] Stanilas's preacher—most excellent indeed! his matter solid, and to the purpose; his manner, more than theatrical, and

greater, both in his action and delivery, than Madame Clairon, who, you must know, is the Garrick of the stage here; he has infinite variety, and keeps up the attention by it wonderfully; his pulpit, oblong, with three seats in it, into which he occasionally casts himself; goes on, then rises, by a graduation of four steps, each of which he profits by, as his discourse inclines him: in short, 'tis a stage, and the variety of his tones would make you imagine there were no less than five or six actors on it together.

I was last night at Baron de Bagg's concert; it was very fine, both music and company; and to-night I go to the Prince of Conti's. There is a Monsieur Popignière, who lives here like a sovereign prince; keeps a company of musicians always in his house, and a full set of players; and gives concerts and plays alternately to the grandees of this metropolis; he is the richest of all the farmer [generals]; he did me the honour last night to send me an invitation to his house, while I stayed here—that is, to his music and table.

I suppose you had terrible snows in Yorkshire, from the accounts I read in the London papers. There has been no snow here, but the weather has been sharp; and was I to be all day in my room, I could not keep myself warm for a shilling a day. This is an expensive article to great houses here—'tis most pleasant and most healthy firing; I shall never bear coals I fear again; and if I can get wood at Coxwould, I will always have a little. I hope

Lydia is better, and not worse, and that I shall hear the same account of you. I hope my Lydia goes on with her French; I speak it fast and fluent, but incorrect both in accent and phrase; but the French tell me I speak it surprising well for the time. In six weeks I shall get over all difficulties, having got over one of the worst, which is to understand whatever is said by others, which I own I found much trouble in at first.

My love to my Lydia. I have got a colour into my face now, though I came with no more than there is in a dishclout.

I am your affectionate,

L. STERNE.*

Laurence Sterne to David Garrick

PARIS, March 19, 1762.

DEAR GARRICK,

This will be put into your hands by Dr. Shippen, a physician, who has been here for some time with Miss Poyntz, and is this moment setting off for your metropolis; so I snatch the opportunity of writing to you and my kind friend Mrs. Garrick.—I see nothing like her here, and yet I have been introduced to one half of their best Goddesses, and in a month more shall be admitted to the shrines of the other half—but I neither worship—or fall (much) upon my knees before them; but, on the contrary, have converted many into Shandeism—for be it known, I Shandy it away fifty times

* *Notes and Queries*, March 13, 1852; Series I. Vol. II. p. 254.

more than I was ever wont, talk more nonsense than ever you heard me talk in your days—and to all sorts of people. “*Qui le diable est cet homme-là*”—said Choiseul, t’other day—“*ce Chevalier Shandy*.”—You’ll think me as vain as a devil, was I to tell you the rest of the dialogue—whether the bearer knows it or no, I know not—’Twill serve up after supper, in Southampton-street, amongst other small dishes, after the fatigues of *Richard III*d—O God! they have nothing here, which gives the nerves so smart a blow, as those great characters in the hands of Garrick! but I forgot I am writing to the man himself.—The devil take (as he will) these transports of enthusiasm! Apropos—the whole City of Paris is bewitch’d with the comic opera, and if it was not for the affair of the Jesuits, which takes up one half of our talk, the comic opera would have it all.—It is a tragical nuisance in all companies as it is, and was it not for some sudden starts and dashes—of Shandeism, which now and then either break the thread, or entangle it so, that the devil himself would be puzzled in winding it off—I should die a martyr—this by the way I never will.—

I send you over some of these comic operas by the bearer, with the *Sallon*, a satire.—The French comedy, I seldom visit it—they act scarce any thing but tragedies—and the Clairon is great, and Mad^m Dumesnil, in some places, still greater than her—yet I cannot bear preaching—I fancy I got a surfeit of it in my younger days.—There is a tragedy to be damn’d to-night—peace be with it, and the gentle brain

which made it ! I have ten thousand things to tell you I cannot write—I do a thousand things which cut no figure, *but in the doing*—and as in London, I have the honour of having done and said a thousand things I never did or dream'd of—and yet I dream abundantly.—If the devil stood behind me in the shape of a courier, I could not write faster than I do, having five more letters to dispatch by the same Gentleman ; he is going into another section of the globe, and when he has seen you, he will depart in peace.

The Duke of Orleans has suffered my portrait to be added to the number of some odd men in his collection ; and a gentleman who lives with him has taken it most expressively, at full length *—I purpose to obtain an etching of it, and to send it you—your prayer for me of *rosy health*, is heard.—If I stay here for three or four months, I shall return more than reinstated. My love to Mrs. Garrick.

I am, my dear Garrick,
Your most humble servant,
L. STERNE.

Laurence Sterne to David Garrick

PARIS, April 10, 1762.

MY DEAR GARRICK,

I snatch the occasion of Mr. Wilcox (the last Bishop of Rochester's son) leaving this place for England, to write to you, and I en-

* This portrait, by Carmontelle, is reproduced as the frontispiece of Vol. I. of this work.

close it to Hall, who will put it into your hand, possibly behind the scenes. I hear no news of you, or your *empire*, I would have said *kingdom*—but here every thing is hyperbolized—and if a woman is but simply pleased 'tis *Je suis charmée*—and if she is charmed, 'tis nothing less than that she is *ravi-sh'd*—and when *ravi-sh'd* (which may happen) there is nothing left for her but to fly to the other world for a metaphor, and swear, *qu'elle étoit toute extasiée*—which mode of speaking is, by the bye, here creeping into use, and there is scarce a woman who understands the *bon ton* but is seven times in a day in downright extasy—that is, the devil's in her—by a small mistake of one world for the other—Now, where am I got ?

I have been these two days reading a tragedy, given me by a lady of talents to read, and conjecture if it would do for you.—'Tis from the plan of Diderot, and possibly half a translation of it.—“The Natural Son, or, The Triumph of Virtue,” in five acts. It has too much sentiment in it (at least for me), the speeches too long, and savour too much of *preaching*—this may be a second reason, it is not to my taste.—'Tis all love, love, love, throughout, without much separation in the character ; so I fear it would not do for your stage, and perhaps for the very reasons which recommend it to a French one.—After a vile suspension of three weeks—we are beginning with our comedies and operas again—yours I hear never flourished more—here the comic actors were never so low—the tragedians hold up their heads—in all senses. I have

known *one little man* support the theatrical world, like a David Atlas, upon his shoulders, but Prévile can't do half as much here, though Mad^m Clairon stands by him, and sets her back to his—she is very great, however, and highly improved since you saw her—she also supports her dignity at table, and has her public day every Thursday, when she *gives to eat* (as they say here) to all that are hungry and dry.

You are much talked of here, and much expected as soon as the Peace will let you—these two last days you have happened to engross the whole conversation at two great houses where I was at dinner.—'Tis the greatest problem in nature, in this meridian, that one and the same man should possess such tragic and comic powers, and in such an *equilibrio*, as to divide the world for which of the two Nature intended him.

Crébillon has made a convention with me, which, if he is not too lazy, will be no bad *persiflage*—as soon as I get to Toulouse he has agreed to write me an expostulatory letter upon the indecorums of "T. Shandy"—which is to be answered by recrimination upon the liberties in his own works—these are to be printed together—Crébillon against Sterne—Sterne against Crébillon—the copy to be sold, and the money equally divided.—This is good Swiss-policy.

I am recovered greatly, and if I could spend one whole winter at Toulouse, I should be fortified, in my inner man, beyond all danger of relapsing.—A sad asthma my daughter has been martyr'd with these three winters, but mostly

this last, makes it, I fear, necessary she should try the last remedy of a warmer and softer air, so I am going this week to Versailles, to wait upon Count Choiseul to solicit passports for them.—If this system takes place, they join me here—and after a month's stay we all decamp for the south of France—if not, I shall see you in June next. Mr. Fox, and Mr. Maccartney, having left Paris, I live altogether in French families.—I laugh till I cry, and in the same tender moments *cry till I laugh*. I Shandy it more than ever, and verily do believe, that by mere Shandeism, sublimated by a laughter-loving people, I fence as much against infirmities, as I do by the benefit of air and climate. Adieu, dear Garrick ! present ten thousand of my best respects and wishes to and for my friend Mrs. Garrick—had she been last night upon the Tuileries, she would have annihilated a thousand French goddesses, *in one single turn*.

I am most truly,

My dear friend,

L. STERNE.

Laurence Sterne to Lord Fauconberg

PARIS, April 10, 1762.

Mr. Wilcox, the late Bishop of Rochester's son, passing through this place in his return from Italy, has given me an opportunity of troubling your Lordship with the enclosed for Lady Catherine. I did myself the honour of writing a long letter to your Lordship, dated the 11th of February, from St. Germain, where I retired

for a week with young Mr. Fox, but I suppose that letter never reached your Lordship, because five others sent by that post have all miscarried. Thank God, there was no treason in any one of them.

By all accounts you had a most dismal foggy winter in town ; had I continued there I had certainly been six weeks ago in my grave.

The weather indeed has been extremely severe here, but the air clear always and elastic, and not one foggy day (which is not the case, I believe, always), so that I have been gradually regaining my health, and on the mending hand ever since I came. This was so remarkable the first three weeks that the faculty advised me to stay where I was, and not go southwards so long as I felt I gained ground where I was. By this, together with the great civilities I have met with from the French, I have been trailed on till now in this metropolis, where I purposed to have continued till the end of May and returned home through Holland. I am told, however, by the faculty here that I shall most certainly be where I was again the next winter, if I do not give time for my lungs to strengthen by going down to Toulouse and spending one winter free from coughs and colds ; after which they say they will look upon my cure as complete. This I should not regard on my own account, but fear I shall be compelled to it on my girl's, who, my wife writes me word, and has done some time, is in a declining way with this vile asthma of hers, which these three last winters has been growing worse and worse ; and

that unless something more than bare medicines can be done for her, she will be lost ; and that the only chance for her is to try what one winter in a warmer climate will do for her. This obliges me to wait here till they join me, and to go down and fix them at Toulouse, where I have taken a little house with a large garden in the pleasantest part of the town, and in case I find myself very well when I have fixed them there, shall return ; if not, stay the winter through and come back in May following.

I beg pardon, my Lord, for troubling you with this long and particular account about myself and my affairs, but I thought it my duty to tell you my situation. My family, my Lord, is a very small machine, but it has many wheels in it, and I am forced too often to turn them about—not as I would—but as I can.

I could never have been in France at so critical a period as this, when two of the greatest concerns that ever affected the interest of this kingdom are upon the anvil together—the affair of the Jesuits and the war,—for much of this kingdom's future glory and welfare seems to be depending upon these two great points. The first takes up the attention of the French much more than the last,—and well it may,—for in this city alone the Society have a rent of £95,000 a year. What must their revenues be from the whole kingdom ? It will end, I trow, like our Henry the 8th, in a general resumption.

If your Lordship has not read "*Le compte rendu de Constitutions de Jesuits*," 'tis well worth your perusal. By this time, I suppose, it must

have got to England. I hope your Lordship has had your health this winter. I wish it, as I do every other blessing to you and your family, with the zeal and truth which becomes me.*

Laurence Sterne to Thomas Becket, Publisher

PARIS, [April 12, 1762].

DEAR SIR,

The Gentleman who gives you this Letter, will likewise put into yr. hands, a Play translated from one of Mons^r. Diderot's, by a Lady who resides here, who is a friend both to him and me.—If you like it, I suppose 'twil be at yr. service, because I have recommended it to be sent to you.—I have read it over and think it will do not for *our stage*—'tis yr. business to consider whether it will do for printing—if so—the preference is given to you.

I have desired Mr. Foley, (who used to deal with D. Wilson) to send to You for whatever Books He wants or his friends in Paris or France send him Commissions to buy :—in Peace—this is sometimes considerable.

By the same Carrier who takes my Wife's Baggage from London to Dover, You may send over the underwritten Books to Mr. Foley—they are for Mons. Diderot—but Mr. Foley will receive money for them and then order Mr. Selvin to pay you.

All the Works of Pope—the neatest and cheapest edition—(therefore I suppose not Warburton's).

* *Historical MSS. Com., Report XVI. Vol. II. pp. 189-90.*

The Dramatic Works of Cibber—and Cibber's Life.

Chaucer.

Tillotson's Sermons—the small edition.

All Lock's Works.

The 6 vols of "Shandy"—N.B. (These place to my Acc^t.) for they are for a present to him and all the works of (Vide Card).

These must be packed up in a Box and directed to Mr. Minet & Co. at Dover, to be forwarded to Madame Morrel in Calais—they will by this means go with the Cartel Ship wch. brings over my wife—send a Bill along with them directed to Mr. Foley.

Mrs. Sterne will be in London at Midsummer, and If you will be so good, betwixt [now] and then to collect what is due from the Trade on my Acc^t.—& after paying my Printer & Stationer & yrself—to pay what remains into Mrs. Sterne's hands—her Rec^t. will be sufficient for what money you pay her—I suppose there are 8000 [copies of "Tristram Shandy"] disposed of by this time—so that the remainder may remain selling,—but I hope will be sold off, by the beginning of the next Year, when I shall have something ready to send, or bring with me to Town.

I wrote Mr. Edmundson a Letter last post upon this, In which I told him, In order to settle the Acc^t. at once, I was willing to sell the remainder of the edition to You, with a handsome allowance for the Chances & Drawbacks on yr. side.—If you have any thoughts of this.—You may write me a Line by the return, what You

will give per hundred, & in one word I will answer you whether I will take it or no.—

When Mrs. Sterne is in London, send by her 8 sets of “Shandys,” and 8 sets of “Sermons,” to be put up with her own things.

I am forced to inclose the Card itself w^{ch} we have received from Mr. Diderot—because I have not been able to make it all out—’tis the last Article but one.

Mr. Tollot the Gentleman who does me the favour to deliver You this—will give you two Snuff Boxes—they are of Value—in one is my Portrait, done here—and the Other full of Garnets—I beg you will pack them up somehow or other with a quire or two of paper, so as to make such a Packet, as is not likely to be lost—& send it by the first York Stage coach (with Care)—directed to Mrs. Sterne in the Minster Yard, York :—I have rec^d Mr. Cambridge’s Book safe—it was bought by Commission, so you did well to send me the Price.—My service to all friends. I am Sir

Yr. most faithful and humble Servt.

L. STERNE.*

Though in April Sterne found the colour coming back into his face, in May the knowledge was forced upon him that he was consumptive. Writing on May 10 to the Archbishop of York for an indefinite extension of absence from his livings, he mentions that he has had a fever, “which,” he adds, “has ended the worst possible way it could for me, in a *déflexion poitrine*,

* British Museum, Egerton MSS., m. 1662, f. 5.

as the French physicians call it. It is generally fatal to weak lungs, so I have lost in ten days all I have gained since I came here; and from a relaxation of my lungs, have lost my voice entirely, that 'twill be much if I ever quite recover it." * It was, therefore, imperative that he should go farther south, and he determined to go to Toulouse as soon as his wife and daughter should join him.

Laurence Sterne to Mrs. Sterne, at York

PARIS, May 16, 1762.

MY DEAR,

It is a thousand to one that this reaches you before you have set out.—However I take the chance—you will receive one wrote last night, the moment you get to Mr. E. and to wish you joy of your arrival in town—to that letter, which you will find in town, I have nothing to add that I can think on—for I have almost drain'd my brains dry upon the subject.—For God's sake rise early and gallop away in the cool—and always see that you have not forgot your baggage in changing post-chaises.—You will find good tea upon the road from York to Dover—only bring a little to carry you from Calais to Paris—give the Custom-House Officers what I told you—at Calais give more, if you have much Scotch snuff—but as tobacco is good here, you had best bring a Scotch mill and make it yourself, that is, order your valet to manufacture it—'twill keep him out of mischief.—I would advise you to take three days in

* Fitzgerald: *Sterne* (ed. 1906), p. 235.

coming up, for fear of heating yourselves.—See that they do not give you a bad vehicle, when a better is in the yard, but you will look sharp—drink small Rhenish to keep you cool (that is if you like it). Live well, and deny yourselves nothing your hearts wish. So God in heaven prosper and go along with you—kiss my Lydia, and believe me both affectionately,

Yours,

L. STERNE.

Laurence Sterne to Mrs. Sterne, at York

PARIS, May 31, 1762.

MY DEAR,

There have no mails arrived here till this morning, for three posts, so I expected with great impatience a letter from you and Lydia—and lo! it is arrived. You are as busy as Throp's wife, and by the time you receive this, you will be busier still.—I have exhausted all my ideas about your journey—and what is needful for you to do before and during it—so I write only to tell you I am well.—Mr. Colebrooks, the minister of Swizzerland's secretary, I got this morning to write a letter for you to the governor of the Custom-House Office, at Calais—it shall be sent you next post.—You must be cautious about Scotch snuff—take half a pound in your pocket, and make Lyd do the same. 'Tis well I bought you a chaise—there is no getting one in Paris now, but at an enormous price—for they are all sent to the army, and such a one as yours we have not been able to match for forty guineas, for a friend of mine who is going from hence to

Italy—the weather was never known to set in so hot, as it has done the latter end of this month, so he and his party are to get into his chaises by four in the morning, and travel till nine—and not stir out again till six;—but I hope this severe heat will abate by the time you come here—however, I beg of you once more to take special care of heating your blood in travelling, and come *tout doucement* when you find the heat too much—I shall look impatiently for intelligence from you, and hope to hear all goes well; that you conquer all difficulties, that you have received your passport, my picture, etc. Write and tell me something of every thing. I long to see you both, you may be assured, my dear wife and child, after so long a separation—and write me a line directly, that I may have all the notice you can give me, that I may have apartments ready and fit for you when you arrive. For my own part I shall continue writing to you a fortnight longer—present my respects to all friends—you have bid Mr. C[roft] get my visitations at P[ickering and Pocklington] done for me, etc., etc. If any offers are made about the inclosure at Rascal, they must be enclosed to me—nothing that is fairly proposed shall stand still on my score. Do all for the best, as He who guides all things will I hope do for us—so heaven preserve you both—believe me

Your affectionate

L. STERNE.

Love to my Lydia—I have bought her a gold watch to present to her when she comes.

Laurence Sterne to Mrs. Sterne, at York

PARIS, June 7, 1762.

MY DEAR,

I keep my promise and write to you again—I am sorry the bureau must be open'd for the deeds—but you will see it done—I imagine you are convinced of the necessity of bringing three hundred pounds in your pocket—if you consider, Lydia must have two slight negligees—you will want a gown or two—as for painted linens, buy them in town, they will be more admired because English than French.—Mrs. H. writes me word that I am mistaken about buying silk cheaper at Toulouse than Paris, that she advises you to buy what you want here—where they are very beautiful and cheap, as well as blonds, gauzes, etc.—These I say will all cost you sixty guineas—and you must have them—for in this country nothing must be spared for the back—and if you dine on an onion, and lie in a garret seven stories high, you must not betray it in your cloaths, according to which you are well or ill look'd on. When we are got to Toulouse, we must begin to turn the penny, and we may (if you do not game much) live very cheap—I think that expression will divert you—and now God knows I have not a wish but for your health, comfort, and safe arrival here—write to me every other post, that I may know how you go on—you will be in raptures with your chariot.—Mr. R. a gentleman of fortune, who is going to Italy, and has seen it, has offered me thirty guineas for my bargain.—You

will wonder all the way, how I am to find room in it for a third—to ease you of this wonder, 'tis by what the coachmakers here call a cave, which is a second bottom added to that you set your feet upon, which lets the person (who sits over against you) down with his knees to your ancles, and by which you have all more room—and what is more, less heat,—because his head does not intercept the fore-glass—little or nothing—Lyd and I will enjoy this by turns; sometimes I shall take a *bidet*—(a little post horse) and scamper before—at other times I shall sit in fresco upon the arm-chair without doors, and one way or other will do very well.—I am under infinite obligations to Mr. Thornhill, for accommodating me thus, and so genteelly, for 'tis like making a present of it.—Mr. Thornhill will send you an order to receive it at Calais—and now, my dear girls, have I forgot any thing? Adieu! adieu!

Yours most affectionately,

L. STERNE.

A week or ten days will enable you to see every thing—and so long you must stay to rest your bones.

Laurence Sterne to Mrs. Sterne, at York

PARIS, June 14, 1762.

MY DEAREST,

Having an opportunity of writing by a friend who is setting out this morning for London, I write again, in case the last two letters I have wrote this week to you should be detained by contrary winds at Calais—I have wrote to

Mr. E[dmundson] by the same hand, to thank him for his kindness to you in the handsomest manner I could—and have told him, his good heart, and his wife's, have made them overlook the trouble of having you at his house, but that if he takes you apartments near him, they will have occasion still enough left to shew their friendship to us.—I have begged him to assist you, and stand by you as if he was in my place, with regard to the fate of the “Shandys”—and then the copyright.—Mark to keep these things distinct in your head.—But Becket I have ever found to be a man of probity, and I dare say you will have very little trouble in finishing matters with him—and I would rather wish you to treat with him than with another man—but whoever buys the fifth and sixth volumes of “Shandy,” must have the nay-say of the seventh and eighth.—I wish, when you come here, in case the weather is too hot to travel, you could think it pleasant to go to the Spa for four or six weeks, where we should live for half the money we should spend at Paris—after that, we should take the sweetest season of the vintage to go to the south of France—but we will put our heads together, and you shall just do as you please in this, and in every thing which depends on me—for I am a being perfectly contented, when others are pleased—to bear and forbear will ever be my maxim—only I fear the heats through a journey of five hundred miles for you, and my Lydia, more than for myself.—Do not forget the watch chains—bring a couple for a gentleman's watch

likewise; we shall lie under great obligations to the Abbé M., and must make him such a small acknowledgment; according to my way of flourishing, 'twill be a present worth a kingdom to him.—They have bad pins, and vile needles here—bring for yourself, and some for presents—as also a strong bottle-screw, for whatever Scrub we may hire as butler, coachman, etc., to uncork us our Frontinac.—You will find a letter for you at the Lyon d'Argent.—Send for your chaise into the court-yard and see all is tight.—Buy a chain at Calais, strong enough not to be cut off, and let your portmanteau be tied on the forepart of your chaise for fear of a dog's trick—so God bless you both, and remember me to my Lydia.

I am yours affectionately,
L. STERNE.

Laurence Sterne to Mrs. Sterne, at York

PARIS, June 17, 1762.

MY DEAREST,

Probably you will receive another letter with this, by the same post—if so, read this the last.—It will be the last you can possibly receive at York, for I hope it will catch you just as you are upon the wing—if that should happen, I suppose in course you have executed the contents of it, in all things which relate to pecuniary matters, and when these are settled to your mind, you will have got through your last difficulty—every thing else will be a step of pleasure, and by the time you have got half a dozen stages,

you will set up your pipes and sing *Te Deum* together, as you whisk it along.—Desire Mr. C[roft] to send me a proper letter of attorney by you, he will receive it back by return of post. You have done everything well with regard to our Sutton and Stillington affairs, and left things in the best channel—if I was not sure you must have long since got my picture, garnets, etc., I would write and scold Mr. T—— abominably—he put them in Becket's hands to be forwarded by the stage-coach to you, as soon as he got to town.—I long to hear from you, and that all my letters and things are come safe to you, and then you will say that I have not been a bad lad—for you will find I have been writing continually, as I wished you to do—Bring your silver coffee-pot, 'twill serve both to give water, lemonade, and orjead—to say nothing of coffee and chocolate, which, by the bye, is both cheap and good at Toulouse, like other things.—I had like to have forgot a most necessary thing, there are no copper tea-kettles to be had in France, and we shall find such a thing the most comfortable utensil in the house—buy a good strong one, which will hold two quarts—a dish of tea will be of comfort to us in our journey south—I have a bronze tea-pot, which we will carry also—as china cannot be brought over from England, we must make up a villanous party-coloured tea equipage, to regale ourselves, and our English friends, whilst we are at Toulouse—I hope you have got your bill from Becket.—There is a good-natured kind of a trader I have just heard of, at Mr. Foley's, who they think

will be coming off from England to France, with horses, the latter end of June. He happened to come over with a lady, who is sister to Mr. Foley's partner, and I have got her to write a letter to him in London, this post, to beg he will seek you out at Mr. E[dmundson]'s and, in case a cartel ship does not go off before he goes, to take you under his care. He was infinitely friendly, in the same office, last year, to the lady who now writes to him, and nursed her on shipboard, and defended her by land with great good-will.—Do not say I forget you, or whatever can be conducive to your ease of mind, in this journey—I wish I was with you, to do these offices myself, and to strew roses on your way—but I shall have time and occasion to shew you I am not wanting.—Now, my dears, once more pluck up your spirits—trust in God—in me—and in yourselves—with this, was you put to it, you would encounter all these difficulties ten times told.—Write instantly, and tell me you triumph over all fears ; tell me Lydia is better, and a helpmate to you.—You say she grows like me—let her shew me she does so in her contempt of small dangers, and fighting against the apprehensions of them, which is better still. As I will not have F.'s share of the books, you will inform him so.—Give my love to Mr. Fothergill, and to those true friends which Envy has spared me—and for the rest, *laissez passer*.—You will find I speak French tolerably—but I only wish to be understood.—You will soon speak better ; a month's play with a French Demoiselle will make Lydia chatter like a magpye. Mrs. —

understood not a word of it, when she got here, and writes me word she begins to prate apace—you will do the same in a fortnight.—Dear Bess, I have a thousand wishes, but have a hope for every one of them.—You shall chant the same *jubilate*, my dears, so God bless you. My duty to Lydia, which implies my love too. Adieu, believe me

Your affectionate

L. STERNE.

Memorandum : Bring watch-chains, tea-kettle, knives, cookery-book, etc.

You will smile at this last article—so adieu.—At Dover, the Cross Keys ; at Calais, the Lyon D'Argent—the master, a Turk in grain.

Laurence Sterne to Lady D.

PARIS, July 9, 1762.

I will not send your ladyship the trifles you bid me purchase without a line. I am very well pleased with Paris—indeed I meet with so many civilities amongst the people here, that I must sing their praises—the French have a great deal of urbanity in their composition, and to stay a little time amongst them will be agreeable.—I splutter French so as to be understood—but I have had a droll adventure here in which my Latin was of some service to me.—I had hired a chaise and a horse to go about seven miles into the country, but, *Shandean-like*, did not take notice that the horse was almost dead when I took him.—Before I got half-way, the poor animal dropped down dead—so I was forced to

appear before the Police, and began to tell my story in French, which was, that the poor beast had to do with a worse beast than himself, namely *his master*, who had driven him all the day before (Jehu like), and that he had neither had corn, or hay, therefore I was not to pay for the horse—but I might as well have whistled as have spoke French, and I believe my Latin was equal to my uncle Toby's *Lilabulero*—being not understood because of its purity, but by dint of words I forced my judge to do me justice—no common thing, by the way, in France.—My wife and daughter are arrived—the latter does nothing but look out of the window, and complain of the torment of being frizzled.—I wish she may ever remain a child of nature—I hate children of art.

I hope this will find your ladyship well—and that you will be kind enough to direct to me at Toulouse, which place I shall set out for very soon. I am, with truth and sincerity,

Your Ladyship's

Most faithful

L. STERNE.

Laurence Sterne to Mr. E[dmundson], in London

PARIS, July 12, 1762.

DEAR SIR,

My wife and daughter arrived here safe and sound on Thursday, and are in high raptures with the speed and pleasantness of their journey, and particularly of all they see and meet with here. But in their journey from York to Paris nothing has given them a more sensible and

lasting pleasure, than the marks of kindness they received from you and Mrs. E.—The friendship, good-will, and politeness of my two friends I never doubted to me, or mine, and I return you both all a grateful man is capable of, which is merely my thanks. I have taken, however, the liberty of sending an Indian taffety—which Mrs. E. must do me the honour to wear for my wife's sake, who would have got it made up, but that Mr. Stanhope, the Consul of Algiers, who sets off to-morrow morning for London, has been so kind (I mean his lady) as to take charge of it; and we had but just time to procure it: and had we missed that opportunity, as we should have been obliged to have left it behind us at Paris, we knew not when or how to get it to our friend.—I wish it had been better worth a paragraph. If there is any thing we can buy or procure for you here (intelligence included), you have a right to command me—for I am yours, with my wife and girl's kind love to you and Mrs. E.

LAU. STERNE.



END OF VOL. I

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